THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 29, 1995 •

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NEWT'S BUDGET INFERNO

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Houston, Texas
NASA engineers have designed a robotic television camera that could be used by ground controllers to monitor station construction in space. The free-floating basketball-sized camera would have a maneuvering system similar to a space-walker's jet backpack.

Huntsville, Alabama
Boeing has delivered two common berthing mechanism rings and domes to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, a contractor to the Japanese Space Agency. The rings and domes will be used with the Japanese Space Station experimental module for structural testing.

All Manufacturing Sites
To date, the Space Station team has built more than 37,000 pounds of flight hardware.

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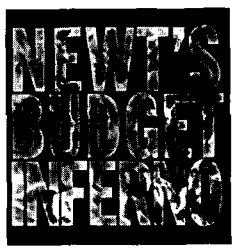
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CORRESPONDENCE

Raking it in

To the editors:

Michael Kinsley ("Confessions of a Buckraker," May 1) wants to know why the "ethics police" won't leave journalists alone to greedily pursue the American dream ("being paid more than you're worth") along with everyone else. Journalists are generally society's most aggressive whistle-blowers, so it is especially imperative that they stay out of bed with "ball-players, business executives and symphony conductors." Capitalist embarrassments like the salaries in those professions, and like our lecture circuit, ought to be among the most important targets for Kinsley—not dreamy ideals.

MATT STRAUS
Saratoga Springs, New York

To the editors:

I don't begrudge Michael Kinsley, George Will and their friends the money they rake in from touring the lecture circuit. However, I do question whether the pundits who people the airwaves and editorial pages with predictable political views are still journalists. Shouldn't that lofty title be reserved for the poor folks who still gather their own facts under the pretense of objective reporting?

I doubt if most media consumers care whether Kinsley chows down at the lucrative trough. We'd be much more alarmed to learn that the local consumer reporter had just returned from a dairy-industry junket only to write that our poisoned milk was as pure as the driven snow.

MARY STOLBERG
Boone, North Carolina

Vostra culpa

To the editors:

Mickey Kaus's TRB ("Who's Sorry Now," May 1) says more about himself than about Robert McNamara. Even George McGovern has said he saw contrition and regret in McNamara's book. And he was once the hero of the most hard-core doves. For Kaus and others like him to show such a lack of charity or forgiveness, and to rake McNamara over the coals despite his mea culpa, betrays what I suspect may be the real reason for the Democrats' troubles at the polls. Their lack of humility and self-righteousness turn off too many people. If McGovern and Gene McCarthy are considered nobodies, it is simply because they and their main support are considered New Left, not orthodox liberal.

WILLIAM R. BROWN
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Clean clocks

To the editors:

James J. Cramer's article "Buck Up" (May 1) writes of the staggered American dollar vis-à-vis the yen. Not to worry, he writes, Japan is hurting and American manufacturing is on the move. He has got to be kidding. Japan is now the world's leading manufacturing nation, leaving America in the dust. It is cleaning our clock, which is why, along with our budget deficits, the dollar is in the doldrums. Japan could buy and sell us with their pocket change. Japan had a budget surplus of $300 billion in 1991 alone.

Cramer writes that Japan is out of money. Surely he jests. Nearly everything American consumers buy has Japanese parts, from telecommunications to engines. If the Japanese so chose, they could swamp the world with things Japanese. Discipline holds them back.

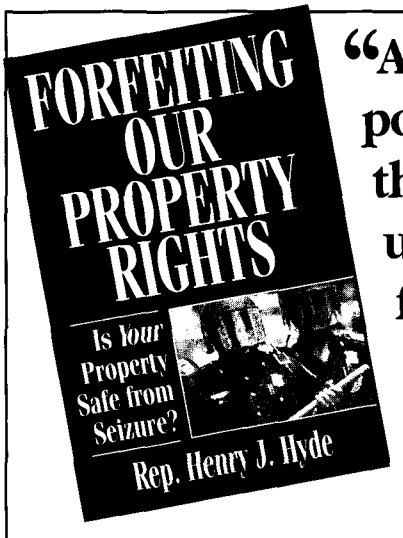
The fact is, despite Cramer's views, this nation could not function without Japan, Inc. Japan's manufacturing abilities are second to none, while America turns into a service-industry nation, the national bird becoming the turkey, the eagle having flown to Japan where it flourishes.

DONALD DAVITT
Prescott, Arizona

Freeform

To the editors:

Sven Birkerts finds fault with Jack Kerouac's attempts at creating a prose style to match jazz tendencies ("Off the Road," April 24). Birkerts feels that the critic missed the point in calling Kerouac's style reminiscent of freeform jazz, because a freeform bebop jazz style actually must follow the complication of a melodic sense—a syntax. I'll assume that the critic is referring to syntax as a melody and chord structure, a key phrase or riff. Well, if music is going to be the analogy for following a syntax, then perhaps Birkerts missed the point of works such as Miles Davis's rendition of "It Never Entered My Mind" and "Well You Needn't." The genius of Miles Davis, Jimi Hendrix, Frank Lloyd Wright, Pablo Picasso—of all the truly great artists—lies in how originally they worked their art around a syntax. And, unless I missed



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something (perhaps Birkerts read a foreign language translation), the syntax that Kerouac was carving around was the English language. The fact of the matter is, had anyone ever written books like this before and pulled it off so freely, with so much life, so much exuberance, so much jazz? It worked, it was a highly original literary embodiment of a movement, end of story.

ROBERT J. NINES JR.
Folcroft, Pennsylvania

Peculiar myth

To the editors:

I'm always struck by the intelligence and good judgment of Sean Wilentz's contributions to THE NEW REPUBLIC, and these qualities were again displayed in his review essay on Tom Paine ("The Air Around Tom Paine," April 24). I was therefore surprised to see him repeat a common but peculiar myth about Paine's contemporary, Adam Smith. "Both men," Wilentz says, "could not help but think of human liberation in terms of a society of small independent producers, where the intensification of commerce would dissolve social privilege ... and check the growth of glaring inequalities." This is certainly true for Paine. But *The Wealth of Nations* makes it quite clear that, for Smith, the normal condition of a modern "commercial society" is for the great majority of the population (at least, the adult male population) to be wage laborers, not independent producers. And the division of society into economic classes with greatly unequal wealth and distinct interests (the "three great orders" being landlords, capitalists and wage laborers) is not an aberration produced by formal privilege, oppression or bad government, rather, it is bound up with the most "natural" and fundamental processes of socio-historical development.

Of course, Smith definitely expected that all classes would benefit (albeit unequally) from the increasing prosperity and other advantages of "commercial society." But Paine's vision of an essentially classless society based on the natural workings of (what Americans now tend to call) "free enterprise" is precisely what Smith did not share.

JEFF WEINTRAUB
Williamstown, Massachusetts

Nitpick

To the editors:

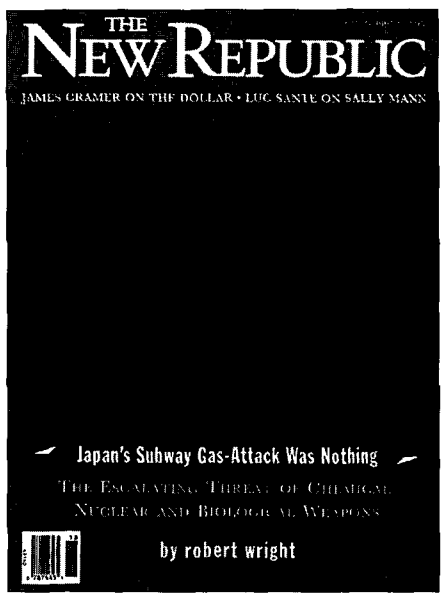
The U.S. Army's School for the Americas was charged with being a training academy for assassins, and a Notebook item in the April 24 issue quotes its spokesman as saying: "Out of 59,000 students who have graduated from a variety of programs, less than 300 have been cited for human rights violations like torture and murder..." I find it disgraceful that the Army would hire a spokesman who doesn't know the difference between "less than" and "fewer than."

HENRY COHEN
Baltimore, Maryland

Anti-social

To the editors:

Alan Wolfe, in "The Good, the Bad and Gingrich" (May 1), seems to believe that the right-wing challenge is in part at least intellectual, that it can be met only through revision of liberalism as it is


THE NEW REPUBLIC
JAMES GRAMER ON THE DOLLAR • LUC SANTE ON SALLY MANN
Japan's Subway Gas-Attack Was Nothing
by robert wright

now understood in America. But debate about that revision is not furthered by the picture he paints of *Beyond Individualism* as an attack upon liberalism and a celebration of the new identity groups in U.S. politics.

My argument is not that these groups are a good thing but that they are confusing. It traces that confusion to individualistic social theory and its hold upon American thought. Because groups are part of political and economic reality but they have no place in our theory, the policies which emerge are ad hoc and contradictory. They often aggravate the problems which they address and are difficult to defend on moral or intellectual grounds. The book is an attempt to enrich American social theory, preserving an underlying concern with individualism but enabling us to think about cohesive social groups and to manage the way in which they emerge and evolve over time. The parallels that Wolfe rightly points out to fascism and communism reflect the organic role that they, too, accord to groups in economic and political life. But my argument about social groups is very different. Its key proposition is that such groups are like linguistic communities. They grow out of social and economic structures that have promoted a set of conversations so restricted that over time people only feel understood by others like themselves. The solution to problems generated by a society organized this way is to develop borderland institutions in schools, unions, geographically based social centers and economic networks, which will promote dialogue across group boundaries.

MICHAEL J. PIORE
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Funny accents

To the editors:

In his encomium to U.S. District Attorney Eric Holder ("Good Cop," May 1), Bill Gifford writes that Holder "speaks in a clear nasal voice that is more Columbia University than Elmhurst, Queens, the middle-class neighborhood where he grew up." Like Holder, I spent a large part of my life growing up in Elmhurst (from junior high school through graduate school). I did not attend Columbia University, but I have visited and I know students who matriculated there. Alas, my poor ear could not then and does not now distinguish a "Columbia voice" from an "Elmhurst voice." Pray, could Mr. Gifford enlighten us?

JOHN J. DI CLEMENTE
Tinley Park, Illinois

To the editors:

A letter in the May 8 issue wonders why you have not made fun of my Brooklyn accent. Perhaps it is because I do not have one. I have a Bayonne, New Jersey, accent. We who were born in New Jersey wage a constant fight against the imperialist side of New York City and I am sure your correspondent did not mean to weigh in on the imperialist side of this ongoing controversy.

BARNEY FRANK
Member, U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

The editors reply:

The author of the letter about Representative Frank's accent had initially misdescribed it as being from "New England." In an effort to correct this, we relied on published descriptions of the admittedly hard-to-discern accent as being from Brooklyn. We apologize to the author and to Frank, and are grateful to him for setting the record straight.

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TRB®

FROM WASHINGTON

Who lost Bosnia?

"As Sarajevo came under some of the worst shelling by Bosnian Serb forces in more than a year, the United Nations said today that it had again overruled calls for a NATO air strike. It sent a letter of protest to the Serbian commander instead."

—*The New York Times*, May 9

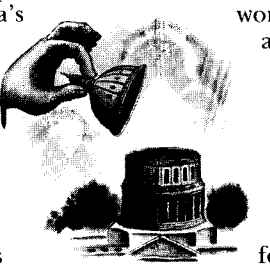
Oh good. When it comes to stopping rampaging Bosnian Serbs, I've always found that nothing works quite like a letter of protest. And you can't beat the price.

If I sound bitter, it's because I periodically entertain the idea that someday the United Nations could play a central role in preserving world peace; and reality periodically reminds me that I'm hopelessly naïve. This year, as spring brings its annual renaissance of death in the Balkans, I refuse to get my hopes up. Instead, I'll sublimate my idealism in a merciless apportionment of blame for the world's failure in Bosnia. Bring on the suspects.

Robert McNamara. One of the great barriers to action in Bosnia has been the misapplication of "lessons" from Vietnam. As if bringing us Vietnam itself weren't bad enough, McNamara has now resurfaced to endorse the misapplications. Counseling against intervention in Bosnia, he lectures: "You cannot confront the powers of nationalism with external military force after the state has begun to dissolve." Granted, it's hard for an outside power to beat indigenous nationalism, especially amid chaos. But in Bosnia, unlike Vietnam, nationalism works for us as well as against us. Our ally isn't some puppet government with a dubious claim to popular allegiance; it is an ethnically and religiously distinct group whose security and identity are deeply at stake. Motivation is not a problem.

A related bit of confusion is the insistence that "air power alone" doesn't win wars. To repeat: we aren't alone in Bosnia—and we'd be even less alone if the Bosnian Muslims were better armed. Combined with NATO air support, an armed indigenous force could have repelled Serbian aggression long ago. Casualties to NATO fliers would have been appreciable, but not so high as to make an air war politically unsustainable. (In these pages I've touted this as a general formula for bolstering peace in the post-cold-war world: the rich, high-tech, but risk-averse West provides air support and arms to victims of aggression, but refrains from sending ground troops because high Western casualties would render the operation politically undoable. Hopes of making my mark in the annals of punditry by dubbing this the "Clinton doctrine" have been complicated by the Clinton administration's lack of interest. See below.)

Boutros Boutros-Ghali. From the beginning, Boutros-Ghali saw conflict in Bosnia as a civil war—and thus saw the U.N. as an impartial "peacekeeper." Certainly Yugoslavia's meltdown was in some ways a civil war. But once the world had recognized Bosnia as a sovereign nation, the Serbia-sponsored assault on its government was also an act of transborder aggression. And the U.N. doctrine of collective security is clear on what this means. The victim is the good guy, the aggressor is the bad guy, and the world community joins the fray (even if only by bombing and providing arms). Collective security, by the way, isn't just part of the U.N. Charter; it was the basic impetus for creating the U.N. after World War II. Is it too much to ask that the secretary general have an affinity for the animating spirit of the United Nations?



One reason some people are reluctant to take sides in the Balkans is that which side is in the right depends on when you started watching the movie. Atrocity is a tradition there, and all groups have shared in it. One virtue of the doctrine of collective security is that it legalistically sidesteps the issue of historical grievance, and all the fruitless debates about who slaughtered whom first. Whatever history's various outrages, borders are borders. Violate them and you're the world's enemy. There are many problems collective security can't address—including most civil wars—but Bosnia wasn't one of them.

George Bush. First, the good news: with the Persian Gulf war, the Bush administration revived the doctrine of collective security. After decades of cold war irrelevance, the Security Council sanctioned transnational reprisal against an aggressor. The bad news is that this magic moment seems to have been a Mr. Magoo-type accident. To be sure, Bush seemed at first to see the significance; he started using the phrase "new world order." But when people asked what it meant, he fell silent. And when war broke out in the Balkans, the reason for his reticence became clear: he had no fondness for collective security when U.S. interests didn't seem directly at stake—which is to say, he had no fondness for collective security.

Early on, with Bush in full post-Gulf glory and Russian nationalism fairly quiescent, Security Council backing for swift and strong NATO air strikes was probably obtainable. And, anyway, Bush could have prodded NATO to action without the U.N. Collective security needn't be the exclusive province of any one acronym. His failure to act was an unconscionable squandering of the precedent set in Iraq. Such precedents are vital to collective security: at great human cost, you convince would-be aggressors that the world won't tolerate aggression, and thereafter deterrence is much cheaper—a few devastating air strikes, say. But Bush never grasped the meaning of the Persian Gulf war, so he couldn't build on it.

General Michael Rose. Rose, former head of U.N. forces in Bosnia, can't be blamed for inheriting a hopeless mission—playing impartial peacekeeper in wartime. But he can be blamed for being an "impartial" with pro-Serbian sentiments. A recent ABC News special on the U.N.'s failure in Bosnia featured videotape of an unguarded conversation with a subordinate in which Rose basically calls the Muslims lazy bums who want the United Nations to do their fighting for them. Good luck.

President Clinton. Clinton is only marginally culpable. By the time he showed up, things were a mess. In particular, "peacekeepers" (read: hostages) had poured into Bosnia, paralyzing both NATO and the United Nations. Besides, to his credit, Clinton has called for air strikes and for multilaterally lifting the arms embargo. Still, he hasn't done so in a full-throated way. And though he mentioned "collective security" in his presidential campaign, he has shown few signs of devotion to it, or of vision generally. Indeed, the move to expand NATO eastward is a rightish cold-war reflex that may seriously dilute the alliance's character and reflects a poverty of imagination. A more progressive idea is one that nobody at the White House seems to take seriously: transforming NATO from a mere mutual defense league into an instrument of collective security beyond its borders. Policeman is a role that, I'm beginning to suspect, we can't always count on the United Nations to play.

ROBERT WRIGHT

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 29, 1995

CLOSING THE DOORS

For the first time in more than thirty years the United States government has begun sending Cubans who reach Florida back to Communist Cuba. The summary exclusion of thirteen rafters last week, the first under President Clinton's new policy, triggered civil disobedience in Miami by Cuban-American protesters. We, too, dislike the spectacle of the Coast Guard herding freedom-seekers back to Fidel Castro's island dungeon. We hope the Clinton administration won't rush into a broader rapprochement with Castro that might help him perpetuate his failing rule. Yet, painful as it may be in the short run, the closing of the cold war-era open door to Cuban escapees is both practically necessary and morally justified. In the long run, it may help undermine Castro's rule more effectively than fiddling with the terms of the U.S. trade embargo, an option that is once again being debated in Congress. Keeping that embargo is important as a symbol of our continuing hostility to Castro. It's also a useful reminder, in this post-cold-war world, that our anathematization of him was born as much out of antipathy to tyranny as such, as out of antipathy to Soviet tyranny.

The new policy is necessary because the U.S. military can't afford to keep 20,000 rafters who fled Cuba last summer in Guantánamo Bay holding camps forever. Nor can the United States take the risk that, with Caribbean currents and winds about to shift, last summer's raftlift might be repeated. Inspiring as the daring freedom flotilla was, hundreds, perhaps thousands, died at sea in rickety homemade boats. Only in Castro's Cuba could freedom of travel mean the freedom to navigate shark-infested waters aboard a chunk of styrofoam.

Clinton's policy is also justifiable, in part because it does not eliminate the freedom of Cubans to migrate to the United States. It simply subjects that right to regulation, rather than to the special exemption from regulation that has existed under the 1965 Cuban Adjustment Act. Some 20,000 Cubans a year will get visas (although for the next two years the inhabitants of Guantánamo who are to be allowed in now will be counted against these quotas). Considering that the entire Cuban population is 11 million, American policy will remain, as it has been, disproportionately generous.

As long as the administration does not fulfill Castro's hope for a major easing of U.S. economic and political pressure, the new rules could help undermine Communist rule. Emigration to America has indirectly complemented Castro's system of political control. Comparing the prospect of a warm official reception in Miami to the risks of resistance at home, most Cubans, understandably, sought to escape—rather than to overthrow—Castro. Dreams of departure absorbed the energy of the best and sharpest potential dissidents. With Castro in control of a political safety valve—sometimes permitting massive escape, as in the 1980 Mariel boatlift, sometimes choking off the flow completely—Cubans lived in constant, debilitating uncertainty. Clinton has clarified the options. Bluntly, the new American policy forces more Cubans to focus their hopes and plans on bringing about democracy at home. Castro, bereft of Soviet help, cannot withstand a citizenry intent on his downfall.

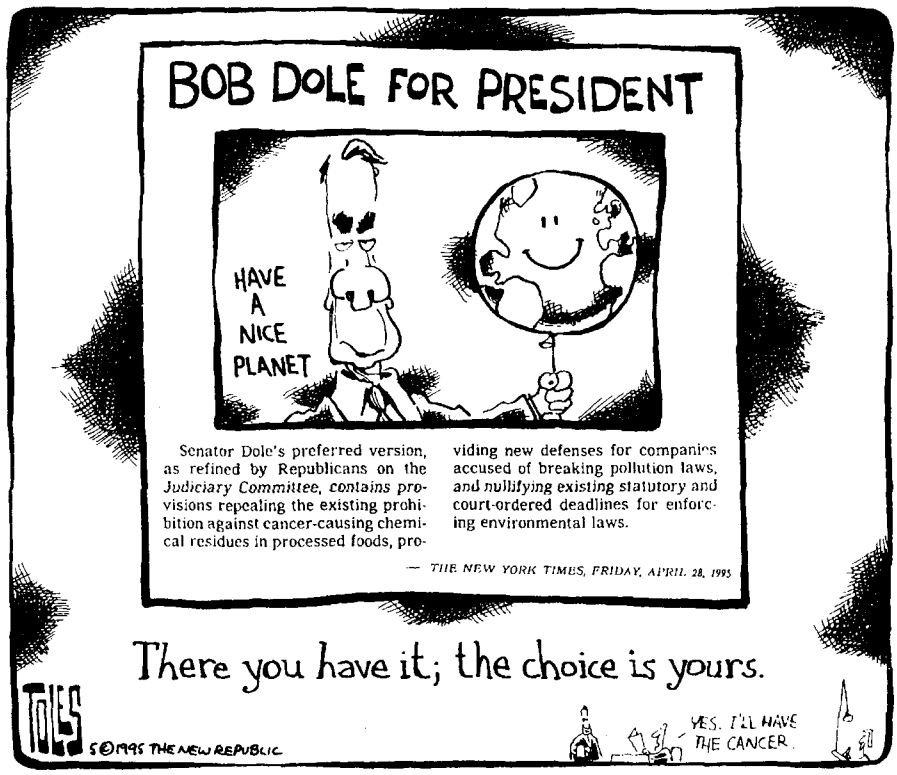


The stream of immigrants from Cuba provided a ready-made constituency to Cuban-American political organizations in the United States. History has vindicated the community's view of Castro's tyranny. But hard-line Cuban-American leaders have been selling (and to some degree, believing) a fantasy of their own: that the United States will oust Castro militarily and install someone of Washington's own choosing as the new man in Havana. Clinton has shown that his policy is no longer hostage to such politics. Neither the suffering of Cubans on the island nor the longing of the exiles can end until there is real political change in Cuba. And Clinton has just taken an agonizing but necessary step toward bringing that about. •

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NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: Eight-year-old Marisa Means of Milford, Ohio, accompanied her father, Bill, to his engineering job on Take Our Daughters to Work Day and saw him get fired.... Life Management, a Salt Lake City self-esteem company, sued the Mormon Church for $189 million over its policy of encouraging members to seek guidance exclusively from the Gospels.... Connecticut Light & Power cut off the power of Artemus Johnson in Hartford, stopping his life-support system and causing his mother to find him "gasping and blue."... Gordon Appell requested and received two ballots for city elections in Denver, Colorado, after seeing a TV report on lax voter-registration laws. When he turned them in, he was arrested for voter fraud.... The Alaska Legislature debated and passed a bill permitting state residents to keep elephants, provided they are used for carnival attraction purposes.... After traveling 6,000 miles tracing the original discovery of Hawaii, six Polynesian voyaging canoes were denied entry to the island by the Coast Guard on the grounds that they were contaminated with midge flies.... Devon Ann Sorlie of Belgrade, Montana, explained that she kept the death of her publisher-husband, Glenn, secret for two days so his obituary would appear first in his weekly newspaper because, "He wouldn't want to get scooped on his own death."


BOB DOLE FOR PRESIDENT
HAVE A NICE PLANET
Senator Dole's preferred version, as refined by Republicans on the Judiciary Committee, contains provisions repealing the existing prohibition against cancer-causing chemical residues in processed foods, providing new defenses for companies accused of breaking pollution laws, and nullifying existing statutory and court-ordered deadlines for enforcing environmental laws.
— THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 1995
There you have it; the choice is yours.
TOLES ©1995 THE NEW REPUBLIC
YES. I'LL HAVE THE CANCER.

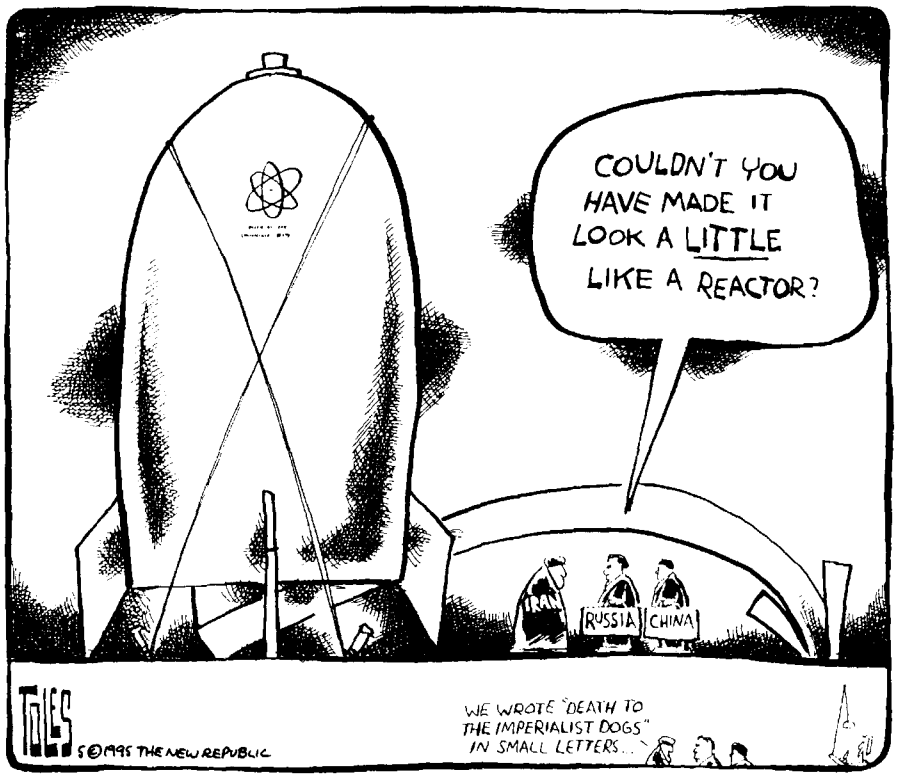
UNFINEST HOUR: Heaven knows we're no Anglophiles, but we were surely not alone in wondering about the symbolism of President Clinton going to Moscow for V-E Day and stiffing London. Yes, at this point, relations with Russia carry more immediate weight. Russian "democracy" is still in intensive care, in critical condition. And we have important business to discuss with the Russians—their sale of nuclear material to Iran, in particular. But on the eve of Clinton's visit, reports emerged of a gruesome civilian massacre in the Chechnya war, a reminder of the moral balancing act Clinton is trying to carry off. Moreover, V-E Day was also the moment when our ally Stalin became poised to annex and cripple the fledgling democratic nations of Central Europe. The man who had originally signed a pact with Nazi Germany saw the German defeat as a means of perpetuating another tyranny, one that lasted five times as long. With that in mind, perhaps Clinton should have skipped both London and Moscow, and gone straight to Warsaw, or to Prague. To be sure, the millions of Soviet casualties in the Second World War should be respected and mourned; their sacrifice in the defeat of Nazi terror was critical. But it's also worth remembering that many of these Soviet casualties were not Russians, and not all of them were victims of Hitler. If Bill Clinton wanted to honor these heroes, he might have visited Kiev, in Ukraine, or one of Stalin's other former captive nations. Meanwhile, Clinton still seems to harbor some deep, personal grudge against the Brits. Having recently provided moral support to anti-British terrorists, he used the fiftieth anniversary of the Brits' finest hour to fly straight to Moscow. A strange way to remember the ally that for several long, terrifying months was the only barrier to complete Nazi domination of the European continent. And a strange way to cement relations with a country that, more recently, was our most important ally in the Gulf war, and a critical supporter at the United Nations. This time, Clinton may not have gotten just history wrong, but foreign policy, too.

THE CURRENCY OF CHIRAC: Perhaps the most important aspect of Jacques Chirac's election as president of France is that he is the first truly post-World War II leader of France, and he thinks accordingly. His vision of Europe is not Jean Monnet's. Growing up without the pathological French fear of Germany, he sees little need to sacrifice French national sovereignty for the sake of the elusive, and largely chimeric, goal of a united European currency or federal European state. He

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represents, in other words, the future: a Europe of free trade, but also of sovereign states. Of course, he still feels obliged to mouth the platitudes of Euro-federalism. But his promise to reduce unemployment levels in France will almost surely put the franc out of the running for a merged Euro-currency by the latest Maastricht target, 1999. This, in our view, is a good thing: not simply for the economic health of Europe, but for its democratic accountability, which is still best assured by that old-fashioned contraption, the nation-state.

RUSTY TANKERS: On May 2, the Senate Governmental Affairs permanent investigations subcommittee opened two days of hearings on why Navy contractors spent $450 million for two oil tankers, and almost a decade later, have absolutely nothing but a heap of rusting rubble to show for it. The fiasco, known as the Navy T-AO 187 Kaiser Class Oiler contract, is almost a case study of the lack of accountability in the military procurement system. As investigators discovered, in 1985 the Navy bestowed a $400 million contract for two oiler ships to the Penn Ship Company of Philadelphia—a near-bankrupt outfit that hadn't built a tanker in years. After the contract was signed, a trust agreement designed to protect the Navy in case the ships were not built was inexplicably canceled, leaving the Navy's financial interests exposed if the contract were terminated for default. Of course, that's exactly what happened. Though a tanker is hardly a complex vessel, Penn was so cash-strapped it couldn't hire the right mechanics to do the job. After terminating the contract, the Navy had the two partially completed oilers towed out of Penn's shipyard in December 1989. At that point, $300 million was already down the drain. But the saga doesn't end there. To finish the job, Navy bureaucrats tapped George Steinbrenner's Tampa Shipyards, yet another financially desperate contractor that had never done this type of work before. As *The Washington Post* reported, though several other, more seasoned outfits had put in higher bids, Steinbrenner was able to get the job by pulling strings in Congress. After an additional $102 million was paid to Tampa, that contract, too, was terminated by the Navy for default. The two unfinished ships were towed to the James River in Virginia, where they rust today. They'll never be finished. Thankfully, the debacle may have prompted an examination of the corrupt Navy procurement process. Senator William Roth of Delaware has introduced legislation that would hold Pentagon bureaucrats accountable for their bungles. Under the Roth bill, which could come up for a vote this month, staffers working in the procurement bureaucracy would be demoted and held financially accountable if federal contracts are delivered late and over budget. The Republicans should seize on it, if only to prove that their commitment to responsible government spending doesn't stop at the doors of the Pentagon.


COULDN'T YOU HAVE MADE IT LOOK A LITTLE LIKE A REACTOR?
IRAN
RUSSIA
CHINA
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WE WROTE "DEATH TO THE IMPERIALIST DOGS" IN SMALL LETTERS...

CELEBRITY CULTURE WATCH: We now have a worthy sequel to the rehabilitations of Richard Nixon as alleged foreign policy sage and Gordon Liddy as radio host. On May 9, *The Washington Post* ran an op-ed piece, headlined "STOP SMEARING THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT," about post-Oklahoma City attacks on conservative extremists. Like most op-eds, it was unremarkable, unoriginal and unpersuasive. But its author was worthy of comment: Charles W. Colson, Watergate crook extraordinaire, who pleaded guilty in 1974 to obstruction of justice in connection with the burglary of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office (other charges were dropped in the plea bargain) and served seven months in prison. Of course, Colson has a right to try to publish his opinions just like any other former criminal. But why should the *Post*, of all places, opt to run them? Millions of other Americans of greater intellect and insight would doubtless love that space to air their own views but lack the notoriety that would get them a direct line to top newspaper editors. It's one thing to allow Colson, having done his time, to get on with his life; it's another to allow him to capitalize on his ignominy in order to disseminate his views. •

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NEW YORK POSTCARD

UNKINDEST CUT

By Stephen Rodrick

Anyone who wants to see how far the culture of victimology has gone in America ought to attend the monthly meeting of the New York chapter of the National Organization of Restoring Men. NORM is one of a number of groups devoted to fighting for the abolition of circumcision and restoring foreskins, by natural means, to circumcised men in the United States. With an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 men in varying stages of reconstruction, male foreskin renewal activists thrive at the psychological crossroads where Robert Bly meets Oprah Winfrey. According to these men's movement sympathizers, circumcised men are casualties of child abuse. "We are not crazy, we are just men trying to take charge of our bodies and restore what was taken away," says Wayne Griffiths, former head of Brothers United for Future Foreskins (BUFF).

Today's meeting is attended by only a hard-core trio. Local chapter members are still recovering from a recent demonstration at the annual convention of the Association of American Pediatricians in Philadelphia. There, the group performed circumcision street theater. "We all got to play the different parts," says Richard DeSeabra, head of the New York chapter of NORM. In the show, a white-coated doctor wrenches the baby from his mother's arms, and a nurse straps him down on a restraining board. To add drama, a boom box blasts the sound of a baby being circumcised. DeSeabra plays the tape for me. At the moment of incision, the baby's screams turn into a gruesome gargling noise.



"It's the first place where violence and sex meet in America," says Marilyn Milos, a registered nurse and founder of the National Organization of Circumcision Information and Resource Center (NOCIRC). Milos lost her job at a California hospital after protesting circumcision and has now made the cause her life's work. "It's often the first time a baby's had an erection. The nurse is manipulating the penis, getting it ready for the doctor, and the next thing the kid knows he's being cut." Many in the anti-circumcision movement suggest that foreskin mutilation leaves an imprint of violence on American boys. "As a sociologist and criminologist, I would wager that the rape rate in America is definitely tied to circumcisions," says Griffiths.

Circumcision, of course, has been around for millennia. But it gathered force in the United States as a universal medical procedure in the early twentieth century. It was used as a preventive measure against bacterial infections, penile cancer, cervical cancer in women and a host of other maladies. Over time, however, medical research has shown the rate of illnesses in non-circumcised men to be no higher than in circumcised men. This led other English-speaking nations to eliminate circumcision from the list of approved surgeries. In England, circumcision levels dropped from 85 percent to near zero in the 1950s when the National Health Service stopped paying for the procedure. Today, the United States is the only Western country (except, of course, Israel) that still circumcises a majority of baby boys.

Alas, as with so many victim-cults, there is a multi-step process to restoring health and wholeness. Jim Bigelow, a NORM member, is the author of *The Joy of Uncircumcising!* With 7,000 copies sold, it's a good mirror of the movement's base. In the book, Bigelow, a former evangelical Christian minister, suggests that circumcised males are victims of physical assault on a par with other forms of child abuse. He cites Bly as an influence and lists the address for Men's Rights Inc., a group intended to guarantee human rights for males. Bigelow argues that men will feel whole again after restoration. He lays out a horrific process by which the foreskin is stretched to cover the entire penis. After enough new skin has been created, small weights, ten to twenty-two ounces, are attached to the skin, stretching it even further. The final step is the use of an expansion device. This contraption tugs the penis downward by force—usually an elastic band attached to its tip and then connected to a knee brace: a kind of orthodontics of the groin.

Custom-made devices are now available, the most popular being "the Tugger," formerly the Penis Uncircumcising Device (PUD). It retails at $115 plus shipping and handling. Of course, no such transformation is without its inconveniences. DeSeabra was running for the subway once, when the device came undone and a small weighted ball flew out of his pants. "Sometimes, I'll be at work and one of the weights will clank up against the desk and everybody will say, 'What the hell was that?' " The entire process can take three to five years.

Currently, NORM and other anti-circumcision groups are trying to make Congress feel their pain. They're lobbying Representative Patricia Schroeder to add male circumcision to H.R. 941, the Federal Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act. So far, Schroeder has refused. NORM has responded in classic victim-speak by crying gender bias. While women's organizations say that comparing male circumcision to a female clitorectomy is outrageous, Milos demurs. "The first cut to a body, male or female, without their approval, is a human rights violation. An American parent has no more right to circumcise their son than an African parent has to circumcise their daughter."

Who said male rage was aimed only at the federal government?

STEPHEN RODRICK is a senior staff writer at *Boston* magazine.

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The governors know better.

GOP WELFARE SCAM

By Paul Offner

George Voinovich is a rising star in the Republican firmament. Last November, he received 72 percent of the vote in his re-election campaign for governor of Ohio, a state that the Republicans will probably have to win to capture the White House in 1996 (no Republican has ever done so without it). His name shows up on many early lists for a place on the next Republican ticket.

But when it comes to welfare reform, Voinovich, like most Republican governors, is at a loss. He knows that the bill that passed the House of Representatives on March 24 will all but end welfare reform, but he's reluctant to take on Speaker Newt Gingrich and the members of Congress who sponsored it. However, unlike George Pataki of New York and Pete Wilson of California, big state governors who lose much of their federal funding under the House bill yet have remained silent on the subject, Voinovich is at least speaking openly about his quandary.

The key change in the House bill is the move toward block grants. Currently, the federal government picks up 50 to 80 percent of welfare expenditures, depending on the state, and funding is unrestricted; if welfare caseloads increase, the federal dollars rise commensurately. With a block grant like that passed by the House, however, states receive an annual lump-sum payment, and funding is frozen at the 1994 level. The states would have more leeway in spending the money, but would find themselves strapped should the number of cases rise—as they did by 30 percent in the 1989-1992 recession. Had Congress frozen funding in 1988, for instance, Arizona and Florida would have lost more than 60 percent of their 1993 federal dollars. California would have lost $1 billion. The governors know about this risk, but most aren't doing anything about it.

On March 27, Voinovich wrote Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole that, while he had concerns about the House-passed bill, "I strongly support the decision made by the House to convert welfare programs into block grants." In the very same letter, however, Voinovich backed away from his endorsement. With block grants, he wrote, "states are placed in an extremely vulnerable position should the welfare-eligible population increase significantly." He's right, of course, and that's why states have historically opposed capping entitlement spending. Voinovich's solution: "The state and federal governments should be partners in meeting the needs of expanded caseloads in recessions." But that's the current arrangement—as expenditures go up, the feds and the state share in the increases. If he's for the current approach, how can he also be for a block grant—particularly if the funding is frozen?

It's not just welfare that's a problem; it's the whole block grant approach. For Voinovich runs into the same dilemma with day care. "No work program can succeed without a commitment to making quality child care available for recipients," he told Dole. What's more, "the need for child care only will grow as welfare recipients move into the workforce." Yet the House bill, which Voinovich says he supports, freezes day care funding for the next five years at a level *below* what we're spending today. If it passes, states won't be able to fund the increased day care he says we need.

Many Republicans have lost all faith in efforts to reform welfare. Not Voinovich. "Ohio has the strongest JOBS program in the nation," he boasted to Dole. And it got there because it was willing to spend the necessary resources. What's more, moving people off welfare will require "increased investments in work programs." Yet Voinovich supports the House bill that cuts $62 billion over five years from welfare spending, thus depriving states of the resources to make these investments.

What we have here is a man caught in the middle. Everything he has learned while trying to reform Ohio's welfare system over the last four years is in conflict with his Republican allegiances. In November 1994 he wrote that caps on entitlement spending "would constitute the single most burdensome unfunded mandate on already-strained [state] budgets." He knows that increased funding is essential—for education, job training and day care—but he won't come out and say that this bill is a mistake and should be defeated. When push comes to shove, he's more committed to the Republican Party than to reforming welfare.

Why does this matter? Because welfare reform is not like other issues. There are only a handful of stakeholders in the debate. It's not like tax policy, where congressional committee hearings are packed with representatives of different interests and expensively dressed lobbyists patrol the hallways looking for members of Congress to buttonhole. Only two groups have any clout in this fight: the governors, who administer the programs and pay part of the cost; and the ideologues, such as the leaders of the Heritage Foundation and the Children's Defense Fund. This year the governors—at least the majority of them who are Republicans—are behaving like nervous nellies. Governors Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey and Jim Edgar of Illinois have both expressed concerns about the welfare bill, but their criticisms have been muted and lacking in urgency. Like Voinovich, they don't like what's happening to them, but they're not prepared to do anything about it. So the field is left to the ideologues—which this year means the ideologues of the right. And that's bad news for all of us.

PAUL OFFNER is legislative aide to Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

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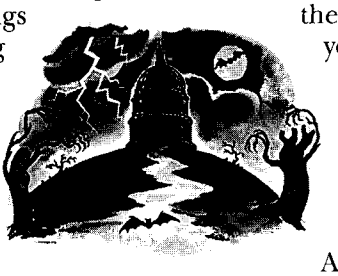
ON THE HILL

WHITEWATER AGAIN

By Weston Kosova

Al D'Amato was hamstrung. As last summer's Senate Whitewater hearings dragged from days into nights, the Banking Committee's chief Republican inquisitor could only watch while Democratic Chairman Don Riegle, straining to appear fair and impartial, allowed senators of both parties to fire away with bizarre and irrelevant questions. When Deputy Treasury Secretary Roger Altman, the crucial witness, staggered away from the table at 2 a.m. on a Wednesday, the committee hadn't come close to untangling the scandal.

Publicly, D'Amato played up the significance of the hearings, calling the evidence against Bill Clinton "shocking." But in private he lamented that the Republicans hadn't hurt him much. The hearings did put Clinton on the defensive, greasing the way for the successful Republican assault on health care reform. D'Amato, though, had hoped for more. The week of testimony was supposed to clarify the murky affair in people's minds, drawing a picture of a criminal president evading the law. Instead, the hearings confused the matter further. "There was too much extraneous testimony," says a Republican Senate aide. "Too many lines of questioning going in so many directions. It was impossible to sort it out."



D'Amato isn't going to let that happen twice. Now Banking chairman, he has tentatively scheduled the next round of Whitewater hearings for this summer. D'Amato's plan is to examine what Riegle did, and do the opposite. Rather than hold hearings before the full committee, he wants to form a special investigative subcommittee for Whitewater, which would have unlimited power to look into the affair. Last year's hearings were hampered by Riegle's promise to Independent Counsel Robert Fiske that the committee wouldn't poke into issues Fiske's office was still investigating. At the time, that included pretty much everything except the circumstances of Vince Foster's death and whether the White House had improperly contacted the Treasury Department about Whitewater. Repeatedly, Riegle had to choke off senators' questions when they broached untouchable territory. D'Amato would have no such boundaries. His special subcommittee could roam the landscape. D'Amato needs approval to form the subcommittee. Last year, Democrats laughed him off the floor even for suggesting it. This year, it's getting serious attention from colleagues (and Clinton challengers) Bob Dole and Phil Gramm.

D'Amato's subcommittee idea has another advantage: it puts more power in his hands. The full committee includes sixteen members, each pursuing a slightly different agenda, each mugging relentlessly for the C-SPAN lens. The subcommittee would have fewer, allowing D'Amato to handpick his fellow Republican prosecutors and to hedge the questions of the panel's Democratic dissenters.

Controlling the questions is important, because the second part of D'Amato's plan is to pare down the investigation, concentrating on the most easily comprehensible strands. "Ideally, a third-grader should get it," says the Senate aide. For instance, D'Amato is not likely to focus much attention on the original, and now widely dismissed, Whitewater charges—that the Clintons put the squeeze on Arkansas bank regulators to lay off of Madison Guaranty, the failing savings and loan owned by their business partner, James McDougal. After years of scrutiny, none of the long series of investigators has come up with evidence for this claim. Likewise, D'Amato will probably give short shrift to one of the hot topics of last year's hearings: whether Foster actually killed himself or, as some Republicans insist, was murdered elsewhere because he knew too much and then laid out at Fort Marcy Park. After last year's hearings ended, the Banking Committee concluded that Foster had indeed committed suicide, the same conclusion reached by the FBI, Fiske and, recently, a Republican-led investigation by the House Government Operations Committee. Despite protests from a few holdouts, notably Accuracy In Media's Reed Irvine, a feverish murder-conspiracy booster, D'Amato won't dwell long on the question. "Otherwise," as one Republican Senate staffer put it, "we risk looking like kooks."

Instead, D'Amato will dig into another, even more compelling, Foster puzzle: What exactly is in the mysterious Whitewater files that White House staff removed from Foster's office on the day of his death? This is a legitimate question. The files, which wound up in the family quarters of the White House, include three years of Whitewater tax returns Foster had completed for the Clintons.

D'Amato will also harp on two other meaty questions. What was the source of some $35,000 Clinton used to help retire his 1984 gubernatorial campaign debt? Clinton did not account for the money, which was raised by McDougal, on his disclosure forms for that year. McDougal claims it came from a fund-raiser. But D'Amato will pursue whether the cash actually was diverted from Madison Guaranty into Clinton's coffers.

Similarly, during his 1990 re-election campaign for Arkansas governor, Clinton borrowed $30,000 in walk-around money from the Bank of Perry County. The bank was owned by Clinton's friend and fellow Demo-

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crat Herby Branscum (whom Clinton later named state highway commissioner). But the loan wasn't reported to the IRS, as the law requires. What's more, Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr—and D'Amato—are looking into why Clinton's disclosure forms for that year don't fully explain how his personal loans were repaid, and why some $40,000 in spent campaign funds is still unaccounted for. The man with the answers may be Neal Ainley, the bank's former president, who was indicted on five felony charges surrounding the dubious loans. Ainley is just a bit player; but, for a plea bargain, Starr is counting on him to roll over on the treasurer of the 1990 campaign, Clinton's friend and White House adviser Bruce Lindsey.

D'Amato's plan is a dramatic departure from the previous Republican strategy to paint Whitewater as a grand national scandal and a grave abuse of power. Instead, by attempting to depict Clinton as a petty, cash-grubbing pol, he is taking a simpler route. It's an easier concept to understand, it doesn't require proof of a vast, shadowy conspiracy and it centers on precisely the questions Clinton has consistently dodged.

All D'Amato needs now is a time slot. Originally, the hearings were scheduled for May (as were House hearings, to be led by Banking Chairman Jim Leach). But the prolonged budget negotiations and the myriad bills rained on the Senate by House Republicans have pushed Whitewater off the calendar. Now, with the Senate scrambling to write post-Oklahoma City anti-terrorism bills, there is no new date in sight. But D'Amato is content to stick it out. The longer he waits, the closer the election gets. •

ON THE HILL II

MEDICARE MADNESS

By Fred Barnes

At the three-day retreat of House Republicans in early May in Leesburg, Virginia, House Speaker Newt Gingrich sought to make the grim task of curbing the growth of Medicare seem downright appealing. John Kasich, the Gingrich groupie who chairs the House Budget Committee, prepared a thirty-page booklet that offered three strategies, including the attractively named "incentive-based Medicare" that would allow old folks to choose expensive or cheaper plans. Gingrich brought in GOP Governor John Engler of Michigan, who told how he'd made deep budget cuts, lost popularity, then risen again and won re-election in a landslide. And while pollster Linda DiVall's numbers showed the American people don't want Medicare slashed, she also pointed to a way Republicans can restrain Medicare without touching off a political firestorm. They must persuade the public they're simply preserving, protecting and improving Medicare.

The idea here is to turn a necessity, saving money, into a virtue, saving Medicare. This won't be easy. At the moment most Americans don't think Medicare needs rescue. The annual report of Medicare's overseers is an arcane document. And its conclusion that the Medicare fund will be bankrupt as soon as 2002 didn't become a staple of GOP rhetoric until late April. So the job—convincing a skeptical public Medicare should be tinkered with—is big. But so is the payoff. If all goes well, Republicans will claim by fall they've cut the deficit, balanced the budget and saved Medicare. There's one other goal: embarrassing President Clinton. Already they're harping on Clinton's refusal to join them on Medicare. In a May 10 speech, House Majority Leader Dick Armey said Clinton insists he's relevant but on Medicare's bankruptcy he decided "no thanks, not relevant."

Are Republicans dreaming? Maybe. The poll numbers DiVall outlined were, except for the preserve-and-protect option, downers. Normally the public warms to spending cuts if they're tied to a popular goal like trimming the deficit or balancing the budget. Not so with Medicare. Balance the budget by cutting Medicare? Sixty-two percent are opposed. Balance the budget by merely reducing Medicare? Fifty-one percent are opposed. A separate poll, conducted for the American Hospital Association and widely circulated on Capitol Hill, is even less encouraging. The survey asked: "If your member of Congress ran for office last fall promising not to cut Social Security but then votes this year to cut Medicare spending, would you say that member of Congress had broken their campaign promise?" Answer: 64 percent yes. If a Medicare cut of 20 percent is required to balance the budget, 60 percent said they'd oppose a balanced budget. Republican leaders dismiss the AHA survey as part of AHA's "scare campaign" to block Medicare changes. Still, it suggests the scope of the selling job for Republicans on Medicare, a job that's all the harder because the GOP's allies against Clinton's health reform scheme last year—hospitals, doctors—are now foes.



Taking a pass on Medicare, as Republicans have done on Social Security and defense spending, was never an option. When House members endorsed the Contract with America last September with its promise of a balanced budget, going after Medicare became inevitable. That's where the money is ($178 billion in 1995). Of course, Gingrich didn't mention this until after the contract had cleared the House and the Medicare trustees had issued their annual report in April. The trustees' finding was no surprise; they'd said virtually the same thing in their 1994 report that Gingrich and everyone else ignored. This year, however, Republicans needed the report to justify the Medicare savings required for a

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balanced budget. And the trustees' language was helpful, particularly the plea for "prompt, effective and decisive action" to stave off Medicare insolvency.

The GOP strategy was to begin a drumbeat of calls for saving Medicare in early May after the Leesburg retreat. But Gingrich couldn't wait. He surprised other Republican leaders by taking up Medicare financing ("the number one challenge facing senior citizens in the near future") in an April 28 speech. He used charts to highlight the trustees' report. He read from a letter he had sent to Clinton asking him to join in "building a national consensus on how to make Medicare solvent." (Gingrich expected Clinton to refuse, which he did.) In every appearance since then, he has dwelled on Medicare. He commandeered the mike on "Meet the Press" on May 7, waving the trustees' report, displaying charts and using poll-tested words to make the case for slowing the growth of Medicare from 10 percent to 5 percent annually and saving $280 billion over seven years. "We believe that we can preserve Medicare and we can protect it, not by cutting it, but by very boldly improving it," he said.

Gingrich is a believer in repetition. Soon every House Republican will be talking about the "Medicare crisis." A one-page primer on Medicare has been produced to include in all letters to constituents. So has the framework of a speech on the subject, plus talking points to respond to the AHA poll and the complaints of the American Association of Retired Persons. "Right now, there's no knowledge in the American people's mind that Medicare is near bankruptcy," says Gingrich spokesman Tony Blankley. "By early June, we'll be up to 20 percent who know. By July, 35 to 40 percent. By mid-August, 60 percent. At that point, you get most of the people who are voters."

The GOP message has problems—beyond its obvious vulnerability to conventional Democratic attacks that Republicans are "cutting" Medicare and jeopardizing the health of older Americans. One problem is hypocrisy. Gingrich and friends opposed ClintonCare in 1994 partly because it would drive folks into managed care. Yet that's what Gingrich's preferred proposal, namely "incentive-based Medicare," would do. Gingrich is also disingenuous in saying that Medicare will be dealt with separately from the budget. Specific Medicare reforms may be put off (until no later than September), but the savings were plugged into the budget Kasich unveiled May 10. Also, Gingrich sometimes implies Republicans were prompted to take on Medicare by the trustees' report. But the report was no surprise. Republicans were already plotting to "restructure" Medicare to save money.

Clinton's rejection of a joint administration-Congress approach to Medicare had the odd effect of emboldening jittery House Republicans to act unilaterally and ahead of Senate Republicans. The president faulted them for slashing Medicare "to pay for tax cuts for people who are well off." He said they would "reduce coverage" and "undermine health services." That attack came on the first day of the Leesburg retreat. Many Republicans concluded they're going to be attacked on Medicare for the next eighteen months even if they back off. On their desks in Leesburg, every House Republican had an electronic box on which to register intensity of approval, from ten to 100, on an issue. The results were flashed on a large computer screen in front of the meeting room. Should Republicans go for a balanced budget even if it means cutting Medicare? That got more than 70 percent. •

The South African nexus.

WHITE RIGHT

By Richard Stengel

They're known as the white right. On weekends, they dress in camouflage, stage guerrilla maneuvers in the brush and rail against the government. Most are mustachioed ex-military men who call themselves patriots. They hoard weapons and ammunition for an imagined day of reckoning. They believe in white supremacism, share an apocalyptic vision of the future and are convinced that God is on their side.

Meet the South African militia movement. They go by the acronyms AWB (Afrikaner Resistance Movement), BBB (White Liberation Movement) and BWB (Boer Resistance Movement) and they embrace dozens of other groups and private armies too small and shadowy to mention. They are Afrikaner-dominated, but in their don't-tread-on-me rhetoric, their jackboot military style and their muddled conspiracy theories they are similar to the grass-roots American militia movements we have lately come to know.

In the weeks before South Africa's first democratic elections a little more than a year ago, the white right mounted a nationwide bombing campaign, setting off dozens of small explosions in the countryside and two traumatic car-bomb blasts in Johannesburg. "The bombing campaign here," says Wim Booyse, a South African political analyst who studies the white right, "was remarkably similar in its methodology to the blast in Oklahoma City. Fertilizer and diesel fuel: that is exactly the techniques that were used here."

While South Africa's white right has its roots in a centuries-old Afrikaner nationalism, its adherents have lately been tutored by their up-to-date American compatriots. "Their closest links are to the European right, like the National Front in England and the National Socialists in Germany," says Booyse, "but they have connections to groups in California and the American South. They exchange information in person and on the Internet and by video. They get *Soldier of Fortune* magazine and attend their conferences. They read these

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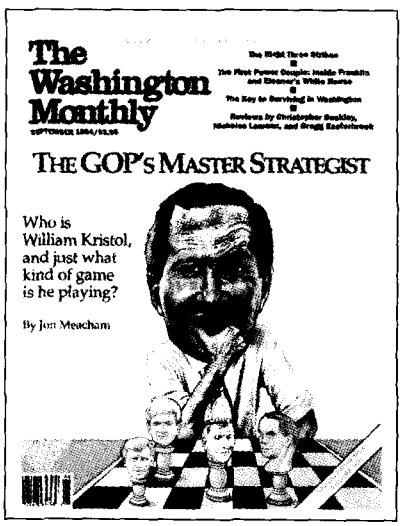
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Who is William Kristol, and just what kind of game is he playing?
By Jon Meacham

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underground American tracts, 'How to Make a Good Bomb,' 'How to be a Good Terrorist.' " In particular, says Booyse, they have ties to the Church of the Creator, a violent, white supremacist group headquartered in North Carolina.

Such a connection is not as strange as it might seem. If you step back for a moment, South Africa and America look curiously similar, like twins separated at birth and evolving under different circumstances. The two countries lead the world in having, per capita, the highest rates of gun possession, the largest prison populations and the largest number of churches. The political mythology of America and the Afrikaners seems to come from the same skewed story book: brave and independent seventeenth-century European settlers conquer a new world, vanquish an indigenous people and create a freedom-loving Christian civilization in the wilderness.

Until recently, the white right in South Africa was a much-feared force. No one knew their precise number but estimates ran into the tens of thousands. They had staged a number of assassinations, including that of the popular communist and ANC leader Chris Hani. The AWB, the most vocal and militant of these organizations, displayed an elaborate structure with regional and town councils, elite commando units and paramilitary youth and women's leagues. All the groups were assumed to be well-armed; a number of robberies of military installations had supplied them with the latest hardware. They had close links to the white South African military establishment; their members included former high-ranking officers in the security forces. Moderate South Africans, both black and white, were worried that the white right might precipitate a civil war, or at least create a grass-roots guerrilla army that could destabilize the country.

Like the various American militia movements, the South African white right saw a powerful central government conspiring to rob them of their freedom and intent on imposing a new political order they detested. That new order was a non-racial democracy, subverting the white supremacist state the right wing had believed in and relied on for decades. To restore the old order, they embraced the same Four B's espoused by one right-wing militia group based in North Carolina: bibles, bullets, beans and bandages.

Just as the American militia movement does, they couch their grievances in the language of rights—the right to be left alone, the right of self-determination, the right to form what they call a *volkstaat* (a white "people's state") within South Africa. The South African white right shares the American far right's abhorrence of the Trilateral Commission, its paranoia about Jewish bankers, its penchant for labeling non-whites "mud people." It even shares the obsession with bar-code labels, believing them to be as both the mark of the beast from the Book of Revelation and a sinister system that will somehow help the powers-that-be take over the world.

Finally, like the American right-wing militias, the South African white right is made up of men who have been marginalized by economic and social change—blue-collar workers or farmers who fear that the black democratic majority will not only seize their jobs but take vengeance on them. And they, too, look backward to a romanticized golden age of freedom from government.

More so than their American counterparts, though, the South African white right has a genuine, if morally shaky grievance. They fear being engulfed by a resentful black majority; they are paranoids with real enemies. They also have a definite goal: a white homeland within South Africa—a dream that has receded with the success of the new democratic government. In fact, the power of the South African right is waning, too. The question is why, and the answer may offer a lesson in how the United States should deal with its own paramilitary white right.

Shortly before the election, the South African white right split into two opposing camps. The larger of the two, the Freedom Front, opted to participate in the election, leaving a smaller, harder-core group of militants who rejected the new dispensation. The ANC and the National Party encouraged the split by praising the leader of the Freedom Front, hoping to pacify the more moderate conservatives and marginalize the more militant groups.

Since the election, the new South African government, led by a man who was long branded terrorist number one, has decided not to treat the white right with an iron fist, though many in the ANC thought it should. Nelson Mandela knew from experience that an internal political movement—whether legitimate or not—that is dealt with too sternly will tend to grow and gain support. Such groups are fueled by resentment, and a rigid response might only give them more to resent. Instead, Mandela told the white right that he would listen to any reasonable proposal they might offer and informed them that they had nothing to fear from the new government so long as they stayed within the law. If they did not, he would come down on them with all the power at his command. He kept up a dialogue with General Constand Viljoen, the Freedom Front's leader, whom he treated like an old-style South African patriot. He even invited the bellicose head of the AWB, Eugene Terre'Blanche, to meet with him. The offer was ostentatiously refused.

What has happened in the last year is that many among the white right realized that they had less to fear than they once imagined. Their cohesion, even their reason for being, was undermined by Mandela's restraint and his democratic treatment of them. In the year since the election, membership in the AWB has fallen off by more than two-thirds, and there have been no bombings. As the former revolutionary well knew, to deal harshly with a threat that might not be real could only serve to make it so.

RICHARD STENGEL, a contributor at *Time*, collaborated with Nelson Mandela on his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Little, Brown).

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How we could *really* cut spending. And won't.

THE BUDGET INFERNO

By Steve Tidrick

In Dante's *Divine Comedy*, an imperfect order prevails amid the smoky chaos of the Inferno. The denizens of the Inferno dwell in their specific regions alongside others who suffer for similar earthly sins. As you descend through the progressively darker, murkier air of the nine circles of Hell, the population of each group of sinners decreases, while the evil of their sins increases.

Which brings to mind the federal budget. Seriously. Dante's Inferno is an apt analogy for the ways in which the federal government subsidizes and enriches corporations, industries and people. In Washington's Inferno, of course, the various levels are dwelling-places not of dead sinners but of living classes of government subsidies and their beneficiaries. Yet, in both infernos, the deeper you descend into the pit, the smokier the air, the dimmer the light, the smaller the populations and the greater the stench of corruption. At the bottom of the Budget Inferno, which has now been inherited by Newt Gingrich and Co., America's free enterprise system itself is corrupted, as subsidies distort and enervate the heart of our economy.

Ironically, the deeper a subsidy's place in the Inferno, the less attention it gets, either as a source of possible savings, or as a chance to restore market competition (and so increase earnings, job growth and investment). Even though the largest subsidies can be found in the lowest depths, politicians looking to offer budget cuts almost always focus on the top-most levels. While there's much old-style spending worth cutting, focusing cuts in this area leaves untouched the bulk of subsidies that benefit the wealthy. Which is a shame, because that's where the real savings are.

The news this week is that the Republicans will continue to embrace this short-sighted approach in their plan to balance the budget. In the last week of February, the GOP-controlled House Appropriations subcommittees approved cuts in education, housing, nutritional help for mothers and schoolchildren, anti-drug efforts in schools, summer jobs for underprivileged high-school students and Food Stamps. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities calculated that of the $17 billion of rescissions, 66 percent came out of programs geared to the poor. (In the more modest Senate version, 55 percent hit the poor.) This strategy has remained consistent since February: of the $146 billion of specific spending cuts that have moved forward in the House, 69 percent come from programs for low-income groups.

A journey through the Budget Inferno suggests that there could be a different strategy. But, be warned, the journey can be startling, and even shocking. Recall the sign at the entrance to Dante's Inferno: "BEFORE ME NOTHING BUT ETERNAL THINGS WERE MADE, AND I ENDURE ETERNALLY. ABANDON EVERY HOPE, WHO ENTER HERE." Happily, these words do not apply to the budget; while some structures endure and some subsidies last for decades, nothing here is eternal and irrevocable, with the possible exception of Strom Thurmond. And there is a Paradiso at the end: the elimination of the deficit by 2000 without cutting programs that help the poor and elderly, without reducing defense preparedness and without raising tax rates. Don't believe me? Come along.

At the entrance to the Budget Inferno is welfare for the poor: Medicaid, Food Stamps and similar programs. As defined by the Congressional Research Service, these programs cost $194 billion in 1994. While this sounds like a lot, it actually represents only 13 percent of total spending. Much larger subsidies for the non-poor lie quietly in the deeper levels.

Yet even in anti-poverty programs the non-poor find opportunities for enriching themselves. Most "welfare" spending never touches the hands of poor people. Instead, it goes directly to grocers, landlords and medical and social welfare professionals. In 1994, $89 billion went to the health care industry through Medicaid, $9 billion went to landlords through Housing and Urban Development programs and $38 billion went to agribusiness and food retailers through child nutrition programs and Food Stamps. (It was farm-state legislators who in February held up the GOP blueprint for cutting Food Stamps.) The remaining $58 billion (30 percent of total anti-poverty welfare) went directly to the poor in the form of income payments. For all the debate about the uses of welfare, everyone agrees these

STEVE TIDRICK is budget policy analyst at the Progressive Policy Institute. ROBERT KNISELY, a deputy director of the National Performance Review, contributed to this article.

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payments do little more than keep body and soul together; the profiteers are those who invest in the businesses where the poor spend their subsistence income, such as inner-city liquor stores, convenience marts and check-cashing operations.

Directly below the ante-room of anti-poverty programs is the much-lamented pork level, the realm of so-called "pork-barrel" projects. Members of Congress work hard to fund projects in their home districts as an easy, tangible way to keep their constituents happy. Through skilled deal-making, they sneak pork funding into appropriations bills during the last stages of the legislative process, and—presto!—the funding appears. By skirting the normal appropriations process, congressional sponsors steer pet projects away from the scrutiny of their colleagues. This does not mean, however, that they elude the public. Numerous watchdog groups sniff out pork like nothing else, and they publicize horror stories that national and local newspapers eagerly report. One such group is Citizens Against Government Waste, publisher of the annual *Big Pig Book*, which lists specific projects, along with their costs and the places that benefit. Among this year's winners: funds for algae eradication in the waters off Maui ($400,000) and for a movie theater in Cleveland ($100,000).

But the sad news is that pork doesn't cost the taxpayer that much. Citizens Against Government Waste, aiming for the most inclusive list possible, estimated the total amount of pork in the 1995 appropriations bills at $10 billion. In a budget that spends $1,500 billion annually, pork is peanuts. Of course, peanuts are also pork, but the peanuts lobby is so powerful that its subsidies don't depend on annual pork-barrel politicking; its subsidies are embedded deeper in the pit.

The second level down, defense waste, includes pork of its own. Buried in the 1995 defense and military construction appropriations bills, for example, are funds for the Wild Horses Roundup at White Sands ($1.5 million) and a Navy cryogenics facility in North Carolina ($2.1 million). When it comes to unnecessary defense spending, however, these are bacon bits. Last year, the Congressional Budget Office identified thirty-seven specific defense-related programs, weapons systems, projects and operations, along with rationales for reducing or eliminating their funding. If all thirty-seven cuts were implemented, the nation would save about $200 billion over a five-year period—far more than could ever be saved by cutting level-one pork. In the total defense budget ($263 billion in 1994), this is significant savings. But even the CBO book misses some of the more "protected" forms of defense spending: the Air National Guard and Industrial Preparedness are two examples. Unlike the Army National Guard, the Air National Guard has no peacetime mission and, with the possible exception of its transporter units, would not be useful in time of war unless, say, Vermont launches an air attack on Connecticut; yet the government spends more than $4 billion a year to keep it airborne. Industrial Preparedness spending, scattered throughout the budget in fifteen separate procurement accounts, keeps factories ready for wartime production. Unfortunately, the type of conflict for which the money prepares us was conceived of during the cold war, and planning for it has changed little since. The kind of war for which we'd need factories today would be one we'd see coming a mile away. For the kind that would sneak up on us (touched off by Saddam Hussein, say, or terrorists) these factories wouldn't do us any good. We don't need to pay to mothball factories that will stay mothballed until war breaks out. We could step up our existing industrial plants to fill the gap. Again, the attitude that guides industrial preparedness policy is reinforced by industry groups and members of Congress who benefit from the funding.

Of course, national defense is clearly an appropriate governmental function. But when we're spending beyond our real defense needs, these subsidies impose serious costs: they redirect scarce talent, drain national resources and foster economic addictions that are hard to break. The United States still spends almost as much on defense as the rest of the world combined. We can keep our defenses and still save money, if we wean ourselves from our addictions. Perhaps we should even *spend* money on adjustment programs along the lines of the president's recent proposal of a $500 million military defense conversion program. But no one is talking about letting go of $36 billion of unneeded defense inventory or shutting down quiescent factories built and maintained to produce weapons that will never be needed—even though some are talking about cutting Food Stamps by $3 billion a year for the next five years. It's one thing to trade guns for butter; it's another thing to trade butter for extraneous inventory.

The third level down is the province of welfare for the well-off. Most obvious are the so-called "universal" programs which provide assistance to all Americans, regardless of need. According to Republican Senator Hank Brown of Colorado, the nation spends $400 million a year providing unemployment compensation to individuals whose annual net taxable incomes exceed $120,000—at a cost of $1.7 billion over five years.

Bigger bucks lie in Social Security and Medicare. Entitlements paid to the top 5 percent of wage earners (singles who earn more than $100,000 and married couples who earn more than $120,000) cost $46 billion over five years. Paul Tsongas and Warren Rudman's Concord Coalition supports an "affluence test" for Social Security benefits that would gradually reduce payments at income levels above $40,000 (affecting 42 percent of Americans), saving $250 billion over five years. Good luck.

The government also performs various seldom-discussed activities that primarily serve the affluent. No one has cataloged or added them up, but you can find them throughout the budget. The Coast Guard, for example, routinely rescues boat owners and users, as it should—we don't want people left to die at sea—but,

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given that a large proportion of boat owners and users are wealthy, why should the taxpayers pay $700 million a year for this service? Why not cover the costs through rescue charges and higher licensing fees? Or consider the National Endowment for the Arts. Insofar as NEA grants translate into marginally lower ticket prices at symphonies, ballets and art galleries, they often subsidize the cultural activities of the wealthy.

The government also subsidizes the future wealthy via training programs for careers in medicine and law. The Department of Health and Human Services spends $6.3 billion per year on various programs to help fund the training of doctors but not lesser-paid allied health professionals; the Department of Education spends $15 million per year on the Law School Clinical Experience program. Although government-sponsored loans may be justified because they provide opportunities for young people, the taxpayer should not be expected to make outright grants to those who will become society's best-paid professionals. Instead of cutting these programs, though, legislators usually focus on cuts closer to the surface, for example in the work-study program, which especially benefits first-generation collegians who are less likely to earn top dollar after graduation.

Finally, deficit spending in the form of Treasury securities benefits the wealthy. Interest payments on securities are not subsidies per se (the government's existence depends on the marketability of these securities) but they are certainly opportunities for profit that the government makes available, and from which the wealthy profit disproportionately. According to 1983 data, the top 1 percent of families own almost half of total Treasury securities. Thus, about $100 billion of the annual $203 billion in interest payments (1994 figures) goes to the 1 percent of families with the highest incomes. This isn't to say interest payments are inappropriate; if investors weren't willing to buy securities, the government would go bankrupt. Still, as long as we run a large deficit, a sizable sum of direct spending will be enriching the well-off in the form of interest payments.

Level four of the Budget Inferno is where corporations and industries line up to collect government handouts in the forms of money and in-kind benefits and services (tax breaks are tucked away at a deeper level). Secretary of Labor Robert Reich stirred interest in these subsidies last November when he called them "corporate welfare." The numbers are big here. Last year, Essential Information Inc., founded by Ralph Nader, published *Aid for Dependent Corporations*, which listed corporate subsidies totaling $51 billion in 1994. Robert Shapiro of the Progressive Policy Institute brought attention to these subsidies in January 1994 when he published a list of forty-six of them worth $114 billion over five years. (The most recent version of this list, released this March, identifies eighty-nine such subsidies costing $131 billion over five years.) The Cato Institute will soon release *Ending Corporate Welfare As We Know It*, citing 129 subsidies costing $87 billion a year.

Read through these lists in one sitting and you may get dizzy. For starters, how about that USDA program that spent $110 million a year advertising American food products abroad, including $2.9 million on advertising for Pillsbury muffins and pies, $10 million for Sunkist oranges, $465,000 for McDonald's Chicken McNuggets, $1.2 million for American Legend mink coats and $2.5 million for Dole pineapples, nuts and prunes? Or the $140 million the Federal Highway Trust Fund paid last year to build the roads in the national forests by which logging companies such as Weyerhaeuser and Georgia Pacific remove the timber. More than 340,000 miles have been built—more than eight times the length of the interstate highway system—and it's only useful until the timber's gone. What about the Sematech program, an annual $100 million taxpayer donation to the fourteen largest U.S. microchip firms, including Intel and National Semiconductor? There's even $91 million spent on price supports for peanuts—or was that pork?

Before descending further, it's worth considering the legal fiction that corporations are not really people. When corporations stand in line for handouts, they act as surrogates for their owners, who are rarely poor people. The Progressive Policy Institute has calculated that the $53 billion of annual industry subsidies that it identified (including the tax subsidies down in level eight) represents a net gain of $11.8 billion a year for the 5 percent of Americans with the highest incomes ($10.5 billion for the top 1 percent), and a net loss of $6.6 billion for Americans in the lowest four-fifths of the income distribution. And just as defense subsidies redirect scarce talent, corporate subsidies take talent from other, more useful enterprises. Open-space reserves and water subsidies subsidize country clubs and golf courses. Are golf courses more important than public parks?

In the amorphous fifth level, categorizing the subsidies is extremely tricky. "Tricky language," "sleight-of-hand" or "odd language" subsidies are either special provisions that are not explicitly subsidies (e.g., the requirement that all interstate highways have four lanes, an allocation of superfluous construction jobs to states like Montana), or stealthy additions to bills that have nothing to do with the subsidy. Usually, tricky language subsidies can only be discovered by carefully analyzing the text of congressional legislation and legislative histories. Yet they are everywhere.

To cite just one recent example, "sleight-of-hand" spending turned up in the Senate version of the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (or ISTEA, pronounced "ice tea," bill). The bill, ostensibly dealing with highways, included funding for a $369 million courthouse in Brooklyn. Perhaps someone was thinking of painting a yellow stripe up one side of the courthouse, and placing a speed-limit sign nearby? It is impossible to estimate the total cost of these provisions, since by their very nature they are hard to find. They include all that weird wording snuck into bills to assure

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that the gravy train stops at your station. Tricky language might, for example, ensure that certain post offices will not be closed, or that a small Office of Personnel Management facility in Denver will remain untouched. What's truly tricky is finding these provisions, and that's the way it's intended. Tricky language subsidies, then, are at least as valuable as regular "pork"—just not as vulnerable.

Once we cross the Styx, we leave behind the realm of "traditional spending" and enter that of "Rumpelstiltskin spending." At levels six and seven—the domiciles of credit and insurance—Congress spins straw into gold. For the cost of mere straw, Congress allots benefits that are as valuable as gold. The magic spinning wheel is a simple accounting method: Congress passes out credit and insurance with a total face value in the trillions of dollars—but it incurs only a small cost for the immediate budgeting period.

Different forms of credit assistance offer different "gold yields" per bushel of straw invested. The calculation is straightforward. Start with the total face value of the various types of credit spending. First there are direct loans, mostly to farmers, small businesses and students, which are worth $155 billion. Next come guaranteed loans, worth $699 billion. Then there's government-sponsored enterprise (GSE) credit (provided by privately owned, government-chartered entities such as Freddie Mac and Sallie Mae), which amounts to $1,502 billion. That's the same figure as the total of *all* "traditional" federal spending—levels one through five—for 1994!

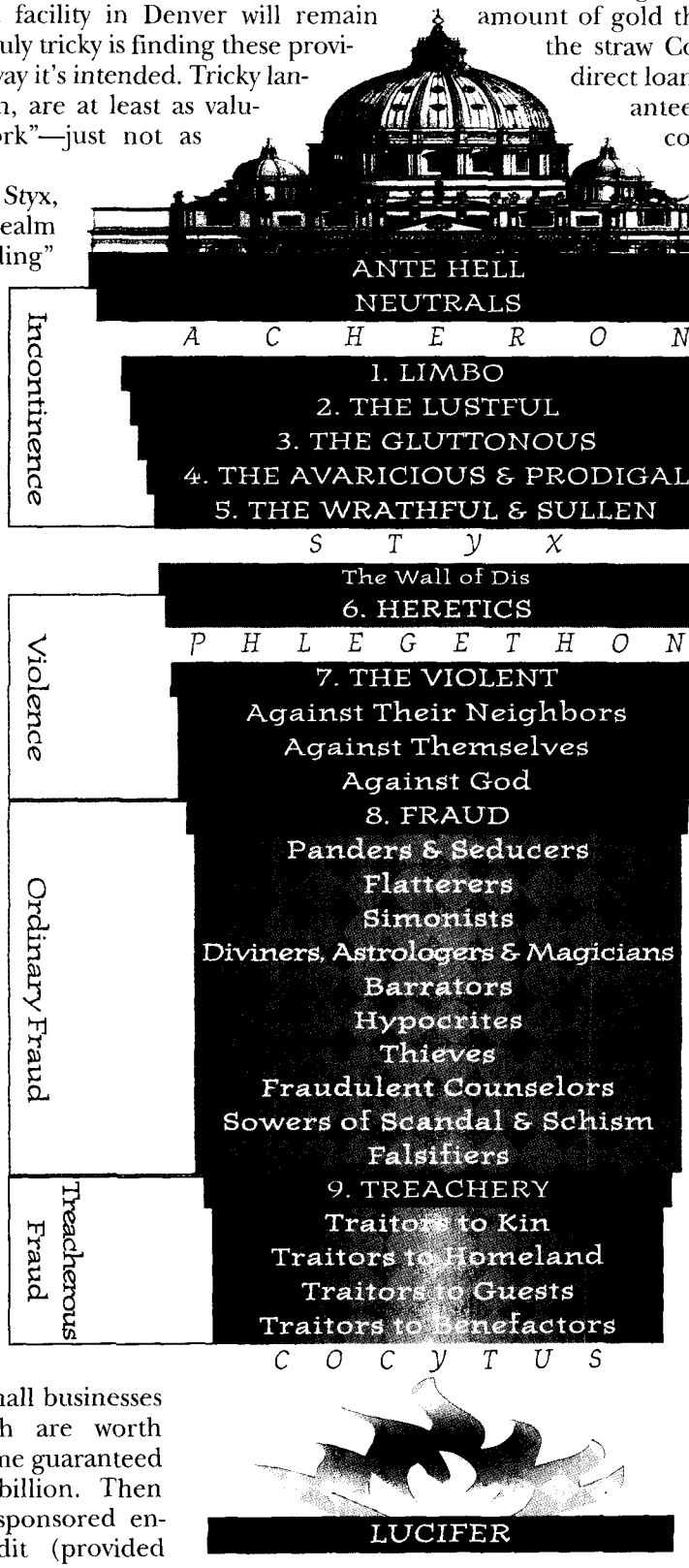


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Then divide these "face values" by the total five-year budgetary costs that Congress expects to incur (estimated cost ranges). The "straw-to-gold ratios"—the amount of gold the beneficiary gets in relation to the straw Congress buys—are as follows: for direct loans, between 1:6 and 1:14; for guaranteed loans, 1:20 to 1:43; for GSE commitments, 1:infinity. Infinity? Believe it or not, GSE debt and securities are not budgeted at all, except for ongoing bailouts, because the government is not legally responsible for them. (This, despite the government's unofficial willingness to step in on behalf of troubled GSEs, which was demonstrated by its intervention when the farm credit system collapsed in the 1980s.)

The face value of the federal government's insurance commitments, another level down, is even bigger, at $5 trillion. The gold yield is lower for insurance (the ratio is 1:90 to 1:290) than for GSE commitments, but only because the Congress makes an appearance of budgeting for its insurance commitments. In fact, the Congress largely turns a blind eye to the true magnitude of the risks for which it insures. The Price-Anderson Act, for example, guarantees that the government will pay for the costs of nuclear plan failure (e.g., Chernobyl) above some relatively minimal amount. One can't even estimate the value of this subsidy; the industry may not have developed without it. Nor would the real estate industry be an "industry" without subsidies provided through the credit and insurance programs.

One major problem with this kind of spending is that the metamorphosis of straw into gold is short-lived, especially with GSE commitments and insurance, which, unlike loans, were not reformed by the 1990 Federal Credit Reform Act. Significant costs will come due someday as shown by the $90 billion S&L (insurance) crisis. Consider, for

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example, pension plans. At the end of 1993, the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation was backing up pension plans that were underfunded by $71 billion (up from $53 billion a year earlier). It has already incurred serious losses, finishing 1994 with a $1 billion deficit. Worse, pension underfunding is mainly in the steel, car, tire and airline industries, and the manufacturing share of the economy is in decline. Democratic Representative Gerald Kleczka of Wisconsin envisions an S&L-style debacle that could cost taxpayers $10 billion or $20 billion at some point in the future. But, again, since there's little immediate budget gain to be realized, Congress has little incentive to change its behavior. What's more, the subsidy consequences of handing out the gold are not scrutinized, for the simple reason that cutting them yields little budgetary savings. Straw is cheap!

Congress took a major leap forward with the Federal Credit Reform Act, which brought the budgetary treatment of credit information out of the Dark Ages. But only a year later the Bush administration ushered back the Middle Ages, collapsing what had been seven separate credit presentations in the annual budget into one. Dennis Ippolito, author of the aptly titled book *Hidden Spending: The Politics of Federal Credit Programs*, says that "whatever the Bush administration's intent, the effect was to make it much more difficult to understand what is going on." Which is also why budget-cutters rarely target them.

Worse, government credit and insurance changes behavior, often leading to inefficient allocation of resources. Many investors look at the existence of a federal loan guarantee or insurance policy, and look no further; since the guarantees are backed by the "full faith and credit" of the United States, there is no need to question the soundness of the underlying program or activity. Unless investors suffer, along with the government, in case of default, investment will not track risk—and that's the function of risk analysis, to make investment more expensive if it's more risky. Where that is not the government goal, Congress should say so. Where it is, the government needs to find ways to leave some exposure to risk around the edges of credit and insurance.

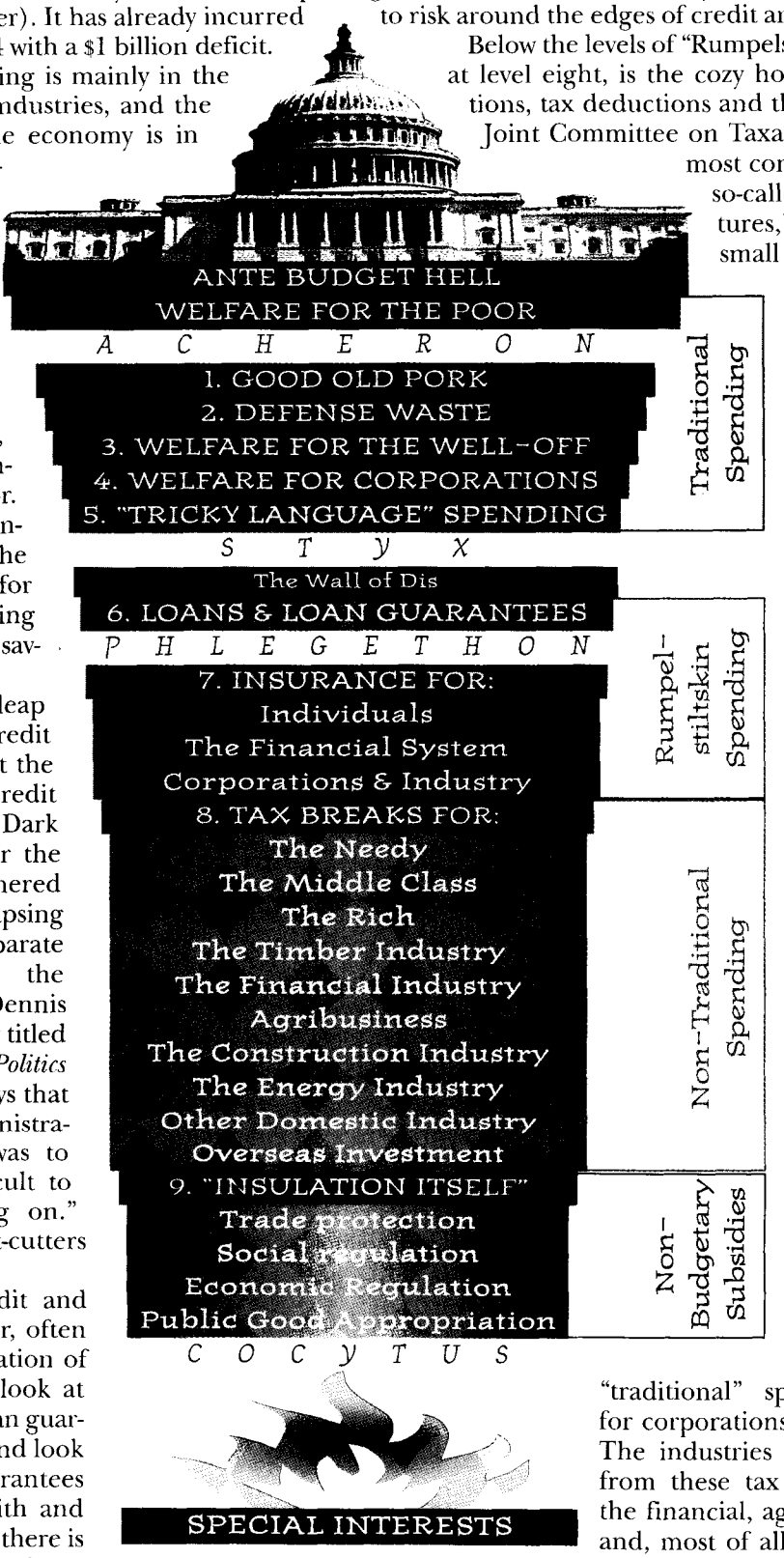


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Below the levels of "Rumpelstiltskin spending," at level eight, is the cozy home of tax exemptions, tax deductions and the like. Congress's Joint Committee on Taxation publishes the most complete list of these so-called "tax expenditures," but it omits the small ones, those that cost less than $50 million over five years. (The committee's definition of small is different from yours or mine.) The General Accounting Office estimates that the total value of all tax expenditures is about $400 billion a year. Many of these subsidies simply underwrite the rates of return of various industry sectors, in large amounts. Citizens for Tax Justice identifies ten "corporate loopholes" to be closed for savings of $412 billion over five years. Plenty of other private policy groups have similar lists of loophole-closings that would save tens or hundreds of billions of dollars. (These are all in addition to the "traditional" spending subsidies for corporations up in level four.) The industries that benefit most from these tax expenditures are the financial, agribusiness, timber and, most of all, energy and construction industries. According to data collected by Douglas Koplow for the Alliance to Save Energy, energy tax subsidies now total about $6 billion per year (favoring fossil fuels

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Tom Cost Has A Vital American



This defibrillator is just one application of TA-23 super-glass technology. Batteries sealed with this corrosion resistant, sure-sealing glass are also used in a variety of other devices, from oil well logging instruments and spacecraft atmospheric probes to portable Army communications equipment.



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over alternatives by a ratio of 2 to 1); and the CBO reports that mortgage interest deductions for the largest homes (mortgage principals above $300,000) total $20.6 billion over five years.

Some reject the concept of a "tax expenditure" and argue that cutting tax breaks is equivalent to raising taxes. But industry-specific tax breaks act just like spending subsidies; they substitute political micro-management for normal market decisions about how capital should be spent. The real tragedy of these subsidies is not that the rich are getting richer, that the mortgage-interest deduction allows us to build larger homes or that the energy industry enjoys extra-high profit margins. It is that the bulk of energy subsidies tips the scales in favor of fossil fuels, diverting resources that in a free market would be invested more in emerging renewable energy sources; and that America has trillions of dollars invested in fancy homes when we really need the money invested in factories. Restructuring tax incentives could encourage savings and investment in business. At the very least, directing the revenues now claimed by industry tax subsidies to deficit reduction would increase the total pool of capital available for investment.

Tax subsidies represent the biggest gold mine for deficit reduction, but, this deep in the Budget Inferno it's very smoky. As the General Accounting Office put it, "funding for narrow interests sometimes is camouflaged in coded jargon that can make it difficult to determine who benefits from a particular provision of the tax code." If you begin to poke around, you'll be startled by how small the beneficiary populations are. Journalists Donald Barlett and James Steele found one tax provision that set "special rules" for certain business projects that involve "a port terminal and oil pipeline extending generally from the area of Los Angeles, California, to the area of Midland, Texas." That language was written for the Pacific & Texas Pipeline and Transportation Co., saving the company $500 million. Then there's a subsidy for ethanol production that costs $3.6 billion over a five-year period; a single corporation is responsible for 60 percent of domestic ethanol production, Archer Daniels Midland, a $10 billion agribusiness, that was the largest "soft money" donor to the GOP in 1992.

Hidden in the smoke are lots of other big campaign donors. Last month, the Center for Responsive Politics published an analysis of eight major subsidies (worth a total of $6.57 billion) identifying the primary corporate beneficiaries, and the contributions made by those corporations via PAC contributions, usually to both parties. After all, many in this level have plenty of spare change. As economist Stanley Surrey found, the vast majority of tax expenditure programs benefit upper-income groups. Many cash-strapped small business owners would be infuriated if they knew how many large corporations pay little or no income tax.

Now we've reached the bottom. At level nine are the trade protections, regulations and government-enforced property rights that serve to protect industries from market forces. Except for the price of administration and enforcement, they cost the Congress nothing. In truth, they cost hundreds of billions of dollars. Trade protection, for starters, costs somewhere from $9 billion to $19 billion annually, using generously low estimates. These estimates include such costs as the higher price that consumers pay for peanuts ($54 million per year) as a result of import quotas on peanuts. Make no mistake, trade protections are taxes, hidden in higher prices of goods we buy.

Estimates of the total annual cost of social and economic regulations, including banking rules and health and safety requirements, range from $400 billion to $667 billion. Here, too, Congress imposes costs that are never budgeted. What's more, there are economic interests at stake that can distort decision-making. Former Federal Trade Commission Chairman Daniel Oliver argues that regulation advocates "may say they have the public interest in mind. Watch out.... You will find underneath a rule designed to benefit one group at the expense of another, designed to transfer wealth from one group to another group with more political power."

A classic illustration: Western coal producers have an interest in urging the adoption of rules that make it difficult for utilities to burn high-sulfur Eastern coal, while Eastern producers have a similar interest in rules against strip-mining Western coal. Or another: regulations (currently under court challenge by the oil industry) require that gasoline in certain areas be reformulated with ethanol—made in large quantities by the Archer Daniels Midland Co., our friends from level eight. (Some people and companies occupy multiple homes in the Budget Inferno.)

Still, most of these regulations achieve goals that the public supports. Included as "costs" are rules that ensure car safety, clean air, clean water. While these are public goods, they are nevertheless subsidies, just like defense spending; they encourage the performance of activities that would not otherwise be performed, and create jobs for which there would not otherwise be a market (e.g., safety engineers and environmental scientists). The question with these regulations is whether the trade-off is worth it: Does the restriction of activities that would harm us warrant the indirect subsidies to the firms that make pollution equipment, remove trash, etc.? In some cases, the answer is certainly yes, but the problem with answering this question for all cases is that the process of making these rules gets so little attention. Even so-called sunshine laws do little to inform the public of the specific politics behind the thousands of individual rules and regulations that govern the economy.

At rock bottom are the appropriations of public goods, the property rights that government has granted where none before existed. When the government gives away public resources to profitable industries, those industries should pay for the use of those resources (and make profits off only the value added). These affect a wide range of activities and include land grants, radio spectrum allocations, mining

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rights on public lands, landing slots at airports, water rights and even antitrust exemptions for cable television, public utilities and baseball. The total value of these rights is also almost incalculable; how can we assess where Southern Pacific would be today were it not for the original land grants in the West? Given the presumed sanctity of property rights, these subsidies are all but frozen in place. Attempts to change them stir powerful interests.

Our brief trip through the Budget Inferno has shattered the myth that the United States has a free market economy. The Congress has established large anchors in the economy that moor investments to particular activities, reduce incentives for developing new sectors and do exactly what Adam Smith said should not be done. It has also shown us the superficiality of most attempts so far to reduce the deficit and suggests that effective efforts to reach our Paradiso—not only eliminating the deficit but excising the remnants of outdated economic policies—must begin with a far more thorough review than has so far been undertaken.

How do we find our Paradiso? David Osborne, author of *Reinventing Government* and a consultant to Vice President Al Gore's first National Performance Review, suggested in *The Washington Post Magazine* in January that Gore's second review (now underway) should deliver a list of subsidies to Congress for elimination as a package. It should abolish "not just programs but subsidies that favor special interests and distort the market," he wrote. "The staff of the first NPR put together a long list of subsidies and calculated what would be saved by axing them.... If a congressional commission packaged several dozen for an up or down vote, as it did with base closings, the bill would pass."

In its present formulation—a working document unvetted by the political process—the NPR's list of subsidies, compiled from the recommendations of 150 published sources and a page-by-page examination of the budget, offers a total budgetary savings of $700 billion dollars over a five-year period. According to the Office of Management and Budget, that's enough to balance the budget by 2000.

Others have compiled different packages to do the same, including Representative Gerald Solomon of New York, the Concord Coalition, the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute. None of these other packages, however, achieves this goal without passing off administrative costs to states and localities, and without raising tax rates, reducing Medicare or Social Security benefits and cutting anti-poverty programs. Under any scenario, changes in Social Security and Medicare are required to maintain balance after a balanced budget is achieved, but the NPR list suggests the chance of at least leaving them untouched in the short term, and anti-poverty programs untouched altogether.

Although the NPR subsidy list was compiled as a catalog, and never intended as a budget "plan," its sheer size speaks to the potential of subsidy elimination as a means of shrinking the deficit. In fact, since the NPR subsidy list treads lightly, if at all, in Budget Inferno levels five, six, seven and nine, the $700 billion figure only *begins* to speak to the sum magnitude of what's down there. Given the public demand for deficit reduction (a recent poll found that 57 percent of Americans value it more than cutting taxes) and disgust with the power of special interests (especially big business), wholesale subsidy elimination could be a boon to whatever party or politician champions it.

This strategy has a potential bipartisan appeal. Last year Ralph Nader's Essential Information argued for a "comprehensive study of the high-cost corporate welfare entitlements before slashing any sums provided to poor people." Recently, in the conservative *American Spectator*, Terry Eastland argued for cutbacks in programs that are "essentially special-interest pork," including "most farm subsidies" and "other welfare for middle- and upper-income earners."

Congress should begin its repair of the economy by ensuring that all future subsidies that intend to solve a temporary industrial or economic problem have an automatic sunset provision. It should then routinely phase out subsidies that are industry-specific. Such a path would not only balance the budget, but unleash the free market as well. In its current array of subsidies, Congress is embracing the growth paradigm of a nineteenth-century agrarian, commodity-based economy preparing for an industrial future powered by fossil fuels. This approach is like that of Spain and Portugal during the early stages of the industrial revolution, when their leaders held fast to an outmoded pre-industrial idea of economic growth; instead of doing the hard work of reinventing spinning and weaving and other industrial arts, they went on collecting South American gold.

As Shapiro explains in the Progressive Policy Institute's new report, *Cut-and-Invest: A Budget Strategy for the New Economy*, we should not only cut but invest as well. Where? Our best bet is investment in the new economy—like restructuring the education system to train (and retrain) scientists, computer specialists and sophisticated technology-users to develop a workforce that can design, manipulate and use new technologies. Instead of cutting summer jobs programs for poor youth, we should discard dead wood (like the 1872 mining subsidies) and use some of the savings to provide every summer jobs program participant with experience in state-of-the-art information technologies.

In the face of the truth about what the government spends money on, cutting anti-poverty programs is indefensible; no true conservative would do such a thing. Such an approach would yield the least savings, the most protection for corporations and the wealthy, and the most pain to the poor and indigent. An alternative strategy of eliminating the deficit by cutting back subsidies for the non-poor would free up money for investment and channel investment into the most profitable ventures, spurring economic growth and creating jobs, while preserving the welfare safety net for the poor. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Odd Man Out

Lindsay Anderson, though dead, is still a troubling man. He made only six feature films in his life, which ended in 1994 when he was 71. True, he spent much of his time directing in the theater, but film was his first love—he co-founded a film journal while still at Oxford—and, for most of us, it's through films that we can remember him. There's the rub. *This Sporting Life*, *If...*, *O Lucky Man!* and the others stick in the memory, but in a peculiar way: they show us the greatness that he never quite achieved.

The subject arises because of a fifty-four-minute film Anderson made about himself the year before he died. **Is That All There Is?** (BBC) was done for TV in Britain as one of a series of autobiographical pieces by directors called *The Director's Place.* (Its American premiere was at the Film Forum in New York.) Like all autobiographies, it reveals more than the author tells, and Anderson was certainly clever enough to know he was taking that risk.

We see him in his modest yet pleasant North London flat, leading his daily life, alarm-clock waking, bath, breakfast, radio news, all against walls hung with framed posters of his films and theater productions. He goes to a supermarket, then stops in a bookshop to ask about sales of his one book, *About John Ford* (a short but illuminating work). At home various people visit him, not all in the same day: the playwright Bernard Kops, the screenwriter David Sherwin, some actors, a TV producer, and two relatives, a brother and a nephew. He has a conference with the designer Jocelyn Herbert and the playwright David Storey, whose work Anderson has often directed.

With the professionals there is much wry talk of money difficulties and producers' shortsightedness. But it's one of the family moments that is the most pungent. The nephew apparently has had a glass too many at the table, leans back too far in his chair and topples. Anderson laughs. The nephew, angered, rises and pours the rest of a bottle of wine on Anderson's head. Anderson hardly reacts.

I suppose Anderson left this moment in the film as a crevice into intimacy and an example of his avuncular forbearance. But, for me, it was one of those possibly unintended revelations. I thought of the moment in *O Lucky Man!* in which Anderson, as himself, is at a screen test and asks an actor for a smile. When the actor declines, Anderson strikes him across the face with the film script. The contrast between the two assaults, then and here, discloses a changing view of power, an evolution of ego.

Egotism, distempered into sheer arrogance, nagged all of his film career. Besides the above, there was the high-handed mixing of color with black-and-white in *If...* without any valid explanation, the high-handed borrowings in *Britannia Hospital* with the air that they became original just because he borrowed them. Reviewing *If...* in 1969, I said: "If there were a way to rate talent in the abstract, Anderson would rank high among the world's directors." But from first to last, his films were marred by flaws that almost carried subtitles: "If *I* do it, it's all right."

It's possible that his film career had a special function for him in relation to his theater career. He was a co-founder of the English Stage Company and for a time was a member of the troika that ran the company's home, the Royal Court. There, and elsewhere, his theater work won high praise. I saw only one of his theater pieces, when it came to New York, David Storey's *Home* with Gielgud and Richardson. I suppose that, indirectly, I saw another—the film version of Storey's *In Celebration*, which Anderson made after he had directed the play. Both of these pieces were excellently done, a director serving an author with talent and without intrusive ego. But in film the director most often is, or wants to be, or often must be, a co-author, credited or not. In film the director supersedes the author, and in film Anderson seemed to be working off the strictures that the theater imposed on his ego.

The obvious precedent is Bergman. Numerous directors have worked in both theater and film, but Bergman is the prime reference. Certainly his filmmaking, done mostly in summers when theaters were closed, was the venue where he could be his own author, freed from obligations to someone else's text. But, at his best, Bergman used film to explore themes in ways that cinema alone could afford, not as revenge on theater's

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Dolores Claiborne. *They builded better than they knew. Stephen King's twisty thriller, about a woman twice suspected of murder, deepens—largely because of Kathy Bates's performance. (Reviewed 4/17/95)* **French Kiss.** *A romantic-comedy contraption, but Meg Ryan is appealing and Kevin Kline, as a French jewel thief with a heart of gold, is a rocket. (5/22/95)* **Priest.** *Two priests, in fact. Both sinners. It's all well enough done, so it rises above its sensational elements. (5/15/95)* **While You Were Sleeping.** *Sandra Bullock—charming, funny, warm—scintillates. A good enough comic situation, which enables her to fall in love with the brother of her alleged fiancé. A nice glass of bubbly. (5/22/95)*—**SK**

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conditions. Which last is what Anderson seemed to do.

Through this final film, Anderson wants us to see him as a staunch independent artist whose independence is still making trouble for him. Fine. That statement is true. But it doesn't explain why this man, who could have been the best film director that Britain ever produced, has left us only imperfect works, which increased in imperfection as he went along.

And the ending of this TV film is eerie. The last sequence takes place on a Thames excursion boat, at a party that Anderson is giving for friends, with Alan Price, whose music was in *O Lucky Man!*, playing and singing a song of his called "Is That All There Is?" We wonder what this is all about. Then Anderson picks up two funerary vases and empties them into the river—the ashes of two actresses, Rachel Roberts and Jill Bennett, with both of whom Anderson had worked and to both of whom this film is dedicated. (Years ago I knew Roberts slightly. Years ago Bennett was a close friend. I'd never seen friends' ashes before. Both of these women, by the way, were suicides.)

Anderson tries to make it an affectionate, almost cheerful farewell. Still, it's a curiosity at the end of an autobiographical film. Bennett, who told me that Anderson was gay, also told me that she loved him dearly as a friend; presumably Roberts did, too. Perhaps, after a life crammed with exacerbations and quarrels and hates—the stories about Anderson were endless—he wanted to close with a gesture of how he could love and was loved.

In 1838 an Englishman named Charles Wheatstone took the first steps toward stereoscopic photography. By the turn of the century many thousands of homes in many countries had stereoscopic viewers through which one could look at double images that then seemed one three-dimensional image. Since then, three-dimensional films have appeared, have astonished audiences, and have faded away.

But experiments continue. The latest is called IMAX 3-D and is the grandest effort so far. At the Sony IMAX Theater in New York the screen is eighty feet wide and 100 feet high. Special goggles are provided. The result? Stereoscopic photos just like the ones your great-grandparents saw, except that these are eighty feet wide and 100 feet high. And move. And have sound.

Wings of Courage (Sony Pictures Classics) is a forty-minute true story about a French airmail pilot's crash in the Andes in 1930 and his trek through snowy peaks to survival. It's a stirring display of the IMAX 3-D process, but some questions occur. Why is this process relevant to anything but spectacular films? Even de Mille-type films need nonspectacular elements, sheer human story, human scenes; and will we ever get used to actors seeming to sit in our laps? Then there are those goggles. Can a film that needs them ever be more than a kind of World's Fair tourist attraction? •

The unbounded vision of Robert Musil.

Precision and Soul

By Michael André Bernstein

I.

When Robert Musil died in exile in Geneva on April 15, 1942, he was virtually a forgotten figure, his reputation fading even among his fellow refugees from Nazism, and his masterpiece, *The Man Without Qualities*, nowhere near completion. Only eight people attended his cremation, and the literary world, except for a few scattered and laconic notices, ignored the event completely.

This lack of attention was not simply a natural consequence of the war's all-consuming hold on the imagination, in comparison with which the fate of a single writer could scarcely be expected to arouse much interest; fifteen months earlier, after all, James Joyce's death in Zurich was marked by an outpouring of articles in mass-circulation newspapers

Michael André Bernstein is professor of English and comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author most recently of *Foregone Conclusions: Against Apocalyptic History* (University of California Press).

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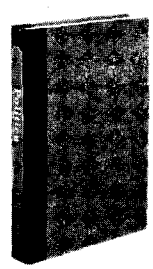
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as well as in literary journals. Moreover, even after the defeat of the Third Reich had restored a German readership to other émigré authors such as Thomas Mann and Bertold Brecht, Robert Musil remained largely unread and unpublished. The first postwar edition of *The Man Without Qualities* did not appear until 1952, and it took another decade and a half before anything resembling a consensus about his importance as one of the pre-eminent European writers of the century emerged.

Today there is little doubt that Musil belongs in the great constellation of European novelists, in the company of Joyce, Proust, Kafka and Svevo, writers who redefined the formal possibilities of their medium and, in the process, reshaped the ways we use storytelling to make sense of our experience. But if the recognition of Musil's mastery has taken so long to secure, this is not due merely to resistance by readers, nor to the intrinsic difficulty of his work. The whole nature of Musil's achievement, the ways in which his work is both difficult and rewarding, constitutes so singular a case

The Man Without Qualities
by Robert Musil
translated by Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike
(Knopf, 2 volumes, 1,774 pp., $60)

that even a thorough grounding—and delight—in the complexities of the other great Modernist authors does little to prepare one for an encounter with a body of work like his.

That is why it is so crucial that a complete translation of *The Man Without Qualities*, on which Musil concentrated for the last twenty years of his life, has finally been made available to English-speaking readers. And that is why, whatever one's reservations about particular details of this translation, its appearance is a literary and intellectual event of singular importance. For decades now, even in the United States, Musil's novel has been alluded to regularly; it has been ransacked for its striking epigraphs and historical aperçus, and invoked as one of the especially revelatory documents that nourish our ongoing fascination with the final days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Now, though, *The Man Without Qualities* is available not merely to specialists in one or another academic discipline, but to any American reader eager to experience the scrupulous lucidity with which Musil transformed the well-made European novel into an open-ended thought-experiment. In Musil's hands, the novel became a "testing ground" for problems whose pertinence is no less powerful today than when he was writing.

There are many differences between Musil and most of the other Modernist masters, but foremost among them is the fact that Musil came to literature from science. He was as expert in theoretical physics, experimental psychology and mechanical engineering as in strictly literary or philosophical questions. The pre-war Austrian intelligentsia placed a much higher value on a rigorous scientific education than did their counterparts in England, France or the United States. Recall Ludwig Wittgenstein, who was initially trained in mechanical engineering, and first came to England in 1908 to study aeronautics at Manchester, before finally turning to philosophy relatively late in his education. Even more than Wittgenstein, Musil sought throughout his whole life to combine a commitment to the most stringent principles of mathematical logic with a mystical yearning for a new, less alienated way of living.

And like Wittgenstein, but with greater irony, Musil mocked everyone who substituted a vaguely inflated rhetoric of soulfulness for the kind of hard thinking that genuine understanding requires. "Anyone who is incapable of solving an integral equation, anyone who is unable to perform a laboratory experiment, should today be forbidden to discuss all spiritual matters," Musil declared in 1921, in his play *Die Schwärmer* (*The Enthusiasts*). And in *The Man Without Qualities*, when Diotima, the society hostess, discovers that she has a profoundly yearning soul, the narrator mordantly comments on such pretensions to spiritual inwardness: "What is a soul? It is easy to define negatively: it is simply that which sneaks off at the mention of algebraic series."

Musil's early preparation for his quest to unite mathematics and mysticism was as idiosyncratic as the project itself. He was born in Klagenfurt, Carinthia, in 1880, the son of a gifted, hard-working and emotionally distant civil engineer with a distinguished career in academic and administrative appointments, and a mother whose temperament was flamboyantly sexual and self-dramatizing. In 1882, when Musil's mother openly took a lover, Heinrich Reiter, her husband seems to have accepted the situation without a struggle, and in 1890 Reiter accompanied the Musil family as their regular "house guest" to Brünn (Brno), where Alfred Musil moved to become a professor of mechanical engineering. This permanent and oddly domestic ménage à trois lasted until Hermine Musil's death in 1924.

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Although he was an outstanding student, Robert Musil suffered from severe attacks of nerves throughout his childhood, and biographers have speculated, often based only on the ambiguous evidence of his fiction, about the links between his recurrent emotional crises and his family's eccentric sexual configuration. What is indisputable, and perhaps even stranger, is how much Musil was haunted by the image of his "lost" sister Elsa, who died, less than 11 months old, four years before Robert's birth. The motif of a vanished and then rediscovered sister, a twin with whom all intimacy is possible, but at the risk of transgressing into the illicit and demonic, became central to *The Man Without Qualities*. The most moving relationship in the novel is the tenderness between Ulrich, the book's protagonist, and his sister Agathe, siblings "who are doppelgängers, who have two souls, but are one." Their mutual attachment is described by Agathe herself as "no longer a love story; it is the very last love story there can be."

Like many boys of his class, Musil was sent to boarding schools as an adolescent. For three years he attended the same military cadet institution in Mährisch-Weisskirchen that Rainer Maria Rilke had so loathed several years earlier. Musil's first important work, *Young Törless*, which was published to considerable critical acclaim in 1906, contains a bitter account of the boarding school's atmosphere of claustrophobia, snobbism, homosexual brutality and intellectual nullity. He abandoned his plans for a military career in 1898, after just one year in Vienna at the Military Academy of Technology, and returned to Brünn to take up civil engineering. Once back in Brünn, though, he also began to attend lectures on literature and philosophy, and became more systematic about noting down his personal impressions and projects in a series of diaries that he continued to keep for the rest of his life.

In 1902, he obtained an assistantship at Germany's most advanced laboratory for mechanical engineering, the Technical Institute in Stuttgart, but a year later, he was already bored with his research and moved to Berlin to begin doctoral studies in philosophy (particularly logic) and experimental psychology. Musil continued to read widely in literature, while simultaneously applying his engineering skills to patent a new design for a color wheel used in experimental psychology tests. In Berlin, Musil studied with Carl Stumpf (to whom Edmund Husserl later dedicated his *Logical Investigations*), and in 1908 he received his doctorate in philosophy, physics and mathematics for

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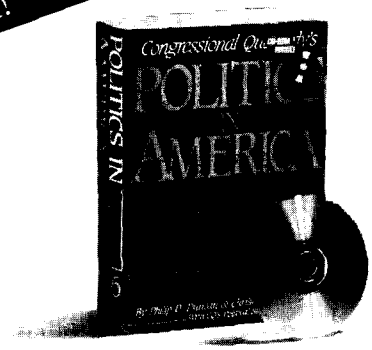
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a thesis on Ernst Mach, the Austrian physicist and philosopher for whom the Mach number, representing the ratio of the speed of an object to the speed of sound in the atmosphere, was named.

But to the disgruntlement of his family, who were still supporting him financially, Musil rejected the academic post that he was offered in order to devote himself entirely to writing. In 1911, he married Martha Marcovaldi, a Jewish-born Berliner who had been married twice before. Martha, who originally had been trained as a visual artist, became the one person on whom Musil was always ready to rely, for his writing and his emotional well-being. Although Agathe in *The Man Without Qualities* differs in many ways from Martha Musil, it is fascinating to see that Musil often referred to his wife as his "married sister." The short stories that he was writing during these years, "The Perfecting of a Love" and "The Temptation of Quiet Veronica" (they were published in 1911 and appear in English translation in a book of Musil's stories called *Five Women*), seem almost collaborative works, so clearly can one sense the perspective and voice of Martha in the texture of both narratives.

Despite Musil's literary success, however, his refusal of an academic career left the couple in precarious circumstances throughout his life, and neither his regular work as a reviewer, editor and cultural critic for leading journals in Berlin and Vienna, nor his brief stints at the Library of the Technical University in Vienna (1911-1914) and at the Press Office of the Austrian Foreign Ministry (1919-1920), assured him of financial stability. In *The Man Without Qualities*, Ulrich has sufficient means to take off a year from his work as a mathematician in order to live free of external constraints, and there is no doubt that his character's economic independence satisfies one of Musil's own persistent yearnings.

Musil continued to produce essays on an enormous range of topics, including politics, art, cinema, metaphysics and the nature of essayistic thinking. The best of these—they are available in English as *Precision and Soul*—contain some of the century's most searching discussions of the breakdown of the European intellectual and imaginative order. Sentences such as "If I want to have a worldview, then I must view the world," or "We do not have too much intellect and too little soul, but too little intellect in matters of the soul," are gradually becoming as much a part of the German aphoristic tradition as the most memorable of Nietzsche's or Schopenhauer's epigrams.



Courtesy The Leo Baeck Institute

ROBERT MUSIL

Still, even his two plays, *Die Schwärmer* (*The Enthusiasts*) and the still untranslated *Vinzenz und die Freundin bedeutender Männer* (*Vincent and the Mistress of Important Men*), which appeared in 1923, did little to improve his financial position. The need for a steady income became all the more pressing as Musil began to devote himself with ever-increasing determination to his great novel. Musil's diary entries show that elements of *The Man Without Qualities* began to crystallize in his mind well before the outbreak of World War I. By 1919 he had already blocked out many of the book's fundamental themes and specific situations, and by 1924 he was working on it full time.

Beginning in 1925, Musil was receiving regular, if modest, advances for the novel (still tentatively called "The Twin Sister") from his publisher Ernst Rowohlt, and in 1926 Musil gave the first extensive interview in a literary journal about his forthcoming book. In October 1930, at the urging of the increasingly impatient Rowohlt, Musil published the first volume of *The Man Without Qualities*, 1,075 pages containing all of Sections One and Two ("A Sort of Introduction" and "Pseudo-reality Prevails"). In 1933, again yielding to pressure from Rowohlt, Musil reluctantly published a second volume of 608 pages, comprising a portion of Part Three ("Into the Millennium"). Musil resented having to publish his work piecemeal. He was afraid that once a significant portion was in print, he would be locked into formulations that did not fully satisfy him, without having the chance to revise these parts in the light of subsequent realizations.

At almost the same time as the second volume appeared, Musil and Martha left Berlin for Vienna, in response to the Nazi accession to power. After the German annexation of Austria in 1938, the Musils again fled, this time to Switzerland, where they lived on increasingly depleted resources until the writer's death in 1942. A third volume of *The Man Without Qualities* had been prepared by Musil for publication in 1938, in an effort to keep alive some public interest in his work. These twenty chapters were intended as a continuation of Part Three, not as its conclusion, but Musil withdrew them when they were already set in galleys. No further parts of *The Man Without Qualities* appeared during Musil's lifetime, but in 1943 Martha had the withdrawn chapters, along with a very small selection from his voluminous drafts and fragments, published at her own expense in Lausanne as Volume Three. Since 1952, under the editorship of Adolf Frisé, who became fascinated with Musil's novel in the 1930s and contacted Martha after the

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war to inquire about the state of the manuscripts, *The Man Without Qualities* has appeared in increasingly expanded and revised editions, incorporating more of Musil's posthumous fragments and draft chapters (the *Nachlass*). The latest of these editions was published in 1978, and serves as the basis of the new translation by Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike.

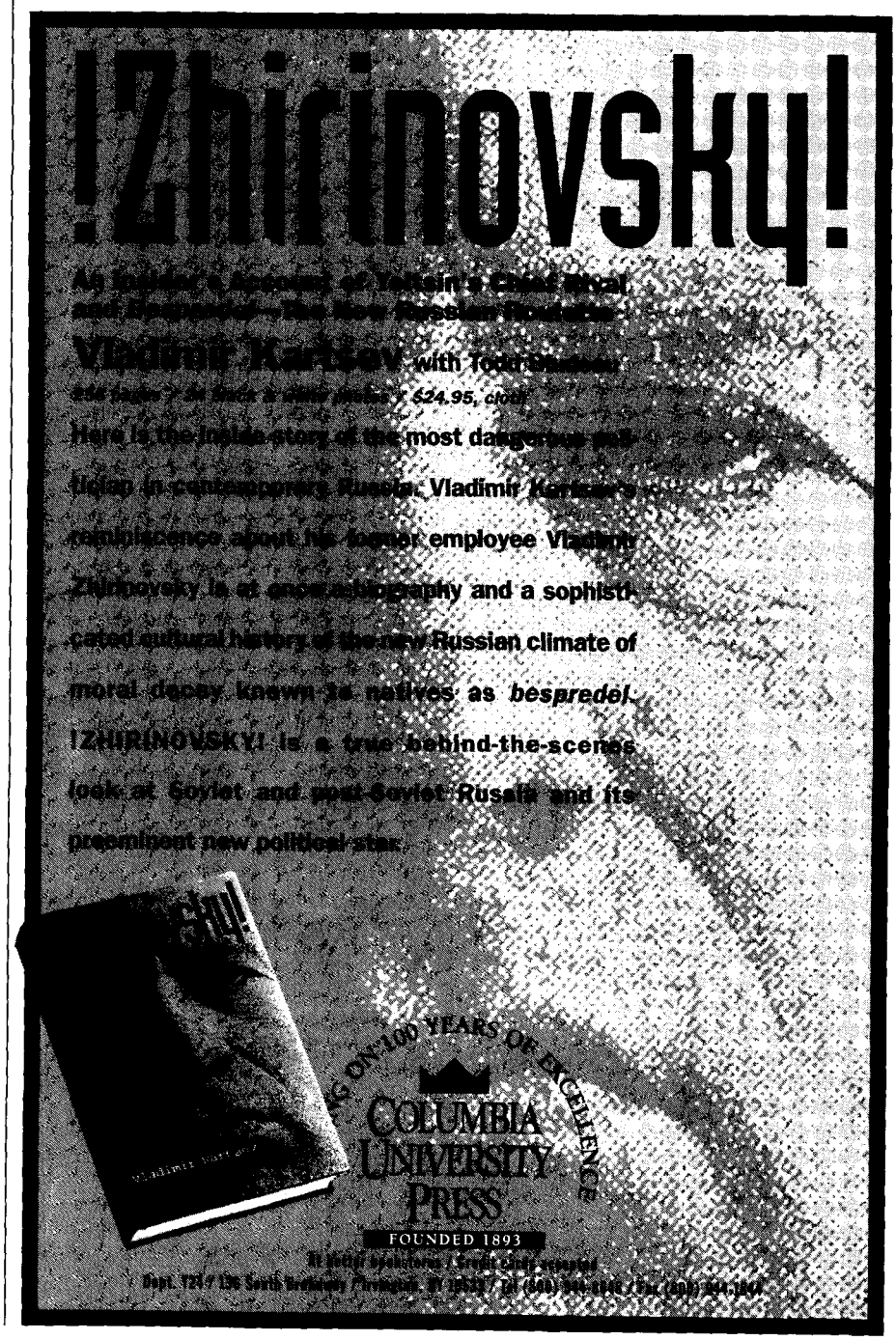
II.

More than most long and complex novels, *The Man Without Qualities* resists being summarized. Far from coming together to form a coherent plot, the book's diverse incidents become increasingly more disparate and fragmented as the novel unfolds. Indeed, the inability of separate stories, motifs and perspectives to coalesce into a meaningful pattern is one of Musil's major themes. *The Man Without Qualities* may be understood as a series of events in search of a plot, just as the Habsburg Empire itself is shown as a haphazard political amalgam engaged in a hopeless search for some unifying meaning or identity.

At the center of all these stories, and providing the novel's sustained focus and source of continuity, is Ulrich, the "man without qualities." An ex-soldier, an experimental scientist, a brilliant mathematician and a casual womanizer, Ulrich decides, at the age of 32, to take a year-long "vacation from life," so as to discover in himself the intellectual rigor, spiritual intensity and emotional depth that, he has grown to feel, must underlie any meaningful action. He has many talents, but he has no qualities, in the sense that his acute self-awareness detaches him from his own attributes, and gives them, in his eyes, a kind of impersonal and even transitory nature. If the other characters in the book have a stable identity and a conviction that whatever beliefs bolster their position in the world must be universally beneficent, Ulrich deliberately resists the reassurance of such stability; he does not want to assume a possessive stance toward the qualities he has, nor use them to take a proprietary attitude toward the world.

The Man Without Qualities opens in August 1913, less than a year before the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the presumptive heir to the Habsburg throne, triggered the outbreak of the First World War. The specific historical situation is central to the novel's unfolding, since Ulrich is prodded by his anxious father, a judge with aristocratic connections, and his beautiful, muddled cousin Diotima, to assume the position of secretary for an ambitious but incoherent plan—the "Parallel Campaign"—to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Emperor Franz Joseph's coronation, which is due to fall on December 2, 1918. Conceived as a patriotic response to the already formulated German idea of honoring Wilhelm II, on July 15, 1918, with a national festival celebrating his thirty years on the throne, the Austrian scheme (or *Parallelaktion*) is pathetically, even risibly, futile, since Franz Joseph was to die in 1916, and in 1918 both the Austrian and the German Empires would collapse and be replaced by republics.

In the first two sections of the novel ("A Sort of Introduction" and "Pseudo-reality Prevails"), Ulrich is drawn into the frantic but essentially vacuous activities set in motion by the Parallel Campaign. Diotima's salon becomes the project's unofficial headquarters, and since almost every section of Austrian society wants to influence the direction of the planned jubilee, Musil is able to paint a rich portrait of the epoch's leading character types and their ideas. At Diotima's receptions, Ulrich encounters everyone from members of the Imperial government and Army General Staff to career diplomats, bourgeois plutocrats and arriviste poets, and in these chapters Musil comes close to creating a kind of Human Comedy of the Habsburg Empire in its final months.


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In a separate development, Ulrich also begins to follow the trial of an obsessed sex-murderer named Moosbrugger, who exerts a hold on the Viennese imagination of the day somewhat as Charles Manson did on the American imagination not long ago. And just as the Parallel Campaign provided Musil with a central focus for the political and economic machinations of Austria's ruling classes, so the Moosbrugger trial turns the novel in a different direction, broaching the themes of madness and messianic delusion as these touch another group of Ulrich's acquaintances, from his frustrated childhood friends Walter and Clarisse to the young right-wing Germanic nationalist Hans Sepp. These minor characters are often compelling in their own right, especially Moosbrugger and Clarisse, whose craziness is disturbingly close to Ulrich's own glimpses of a "second consciousness." Yet they function primarily to enrich the breadth of the novel's social canvas, and, equally importantly, to bring into focus the difficulty and the riskiness of Ulrich's decision not to settle for a partial solution to his search for a meaningful new "science of feeling."

But his father's death and his own increasing indifference to the world of power and politics distance Ulrich more and more from the Campaign. In the third, unfinished section of the work ("Into the Millennium [The Criminals]"), he gives up his position as the Campaign's secretary, abandons his concern with Moosbrugger, and withdraws almost completely from society in order to pursue his quest for a way to heal the rupture between scientific precision and mystical intensity. His sister, Agathe, whom he rediscovers during the settling of their father's estate, decides to divorce her husband and set up house with Ulrich, and together the siblings dedicate themselves to learning how "to hold fast to their intimations ... [of a] second reality ... a day-bright mysticism ... [that] mustn't ever be more than an hour old!"

The mysticism that Ulrich and Agathe seek is not "a secret through which we enter another world, but only ... the secret of living differently" in this world. Musil never finished his description of Ulrich and Agathe's joint search, but the notes that he left behind suggest that this quest, too, ultimately would have failed. In its isolation from the rest of humankind, even as sublime a passion as Ulrich's and Agathe's ends up exhausting itself on the "unstable borderline" between the ecstatic and the solipsistic.

III.

"Unfortunately, nothing is so hard to achieve as a literary representation of a man thinking." This rueful admission by Musil's narrator crystallizes both the difficulty as well as the originality of *The Man Without Qualities*. To an extent unprecedented in Western literature, large stretches of the book contain neither forward-moving action nor inward character development. In their place, we are often given extended sections of pure intellectual-moral speculation, essayistic reflections that exist less to illuminate the private passions of a character than to follow the inner logic of a concept with its own independent claims on our attention. This is a kind of novelistic "essayism," a term that exactly translates Musil's loanword *Essayismus*. By that word Musil did not mean philosophical systematizing, but rather "the unique and unalterable form assumed by a man's inner life in a decisive thought."

This notion is crucial to Musil's conception of the novel's responsibility to express the fullest possible range of human consciousness. Essayism is no longer a question of genre, it is a way of thinking about and experiencing the world as an unfixable, variegated and constantly self-transforming phenomenon "between religion and knowledge, between example and doctrine, between *amor intellectualis* and poetry." Several times in *The Man Without Qualities*, Musil tries to explain his intention and to justify the new kind of writing that intention calls forth: "A man who wants the truth becomes a scholar; a man who wants to give free play to his subjectivity may become a writer, but what should a man do who wants something in between?"

Consider, as an example of one of the novel's "essays," this passage from Ulrich's meditation on the nature of water:

> Nothing had occurred to him except that water is something three times the size of the land, even counting only what everyone recognizes as water: rivers, seas, lakes, springs. It was long thought to be akin to air. The great Newton thought so, and yet most of his other ideas are still as up-to-date as if they had been thought today. The Greeks thought that the world and life had arisen from water. It was a god: Okeanos. Later, water sprites, elves, mermaids, and nymphs were invented. Temples and oracles were built by the waters' edge. The cathedrals of Hildesheim, Paderborn and Bremen were all built over springs, and behold, are those cathedrals not still standing today? And isn't water still used for baptism? And aren't there devotees of water and apostles of natural healing, whose souls are in such oddly sepulchral health? So there was a place in the world like a blurred spot or grass trodden flat. And of course the man without qualities also had modern scientific concepts in his head, whether he happened to be thinking of them or not. According to them water is a colorless liquid, blue only in thick layers, odorless and tasteless, as you recite it over and over in school until you can never forget it, although physiologically it also contains bacteria, vegetable matter, air, iron, calcium sulphate and calcium bicarbonate, and although physically this archetype of liquids is not basically a liquid at all, but, depending on circumstances, a solid, a liquid or a gas. Ultimately it all dissolves into systems of formulas, all somehow interlinked, and there were only a few dozen people in the whole wide world who thought alike about even so simple a thing as water; all the rest talk about it in languages that belong somewhere between today and some thousands of years ago. So one must say that as soon as a man begins to reflect even a little, he falls into disorderly company!

These thoughts are entirely disinterested and abstract, and yet unmistakably redolent of Ulrich's temperament, his way of giving himself over to whatever grips his attention. The prodigious range, in this passage, of references and contexts, rapid shifts in tone and intensely personal juxtaposition of discursive reasoning and sudden, metaphoric intuitions: these all crystallize the ways in which Ulrich's intelligence works, and yet unraveling the separate components does not yield anything like a "psychological portrait" in the accepted novelistic sense. Ulrich is fascinated with water throughout the book, no doubt because in its protean and endlessly changing manifestations it has no fixed identity, and occurs only as a series of temporary states—as a solid, a liquid or a gas—each of which is the element's way of existing in different conditions. Water, that is, can itself be thought of as an element without qualities, and in its lability it is a strikingly appropriate subject for Ulrich's sympathetic attention. Always itself yet always adaptable to multiple ways of manifesting itself, water is essayistic in its self-transformative, unstable and discontinuous character, and thus, by the kind of reasoning Ulrich often enjoys, "having no qualities" is fundamentally akin to an essayistic mode of being.

Ulrich himself could just as easily be called "the Essayistic Man," and Musil makes clear that the concepts of "essayism" and being "without qualities" are simply positive and negative ways of formulating the same cast of mind. Ulrich amuses himself by itemizing the many characteristics, meanings and associations that are linked to the

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single word "water." What emerges from his catalog is an understanding of how much these meanings change depending on the cultural-historical worldview in which the word participates, and at the same time, how often it has been linked to myths of creation, creativity and rebirth.

Even this brief survey takes in Greek legends, medieval Christianity, modern geography, physics, chemistry and medicine, as well as the superstitions of health faddists and the equally blinkered self-assurance of classroom pedagogues. Ulrich's gift here, as throughout the novel, is to be able to listen to diverse and formally irreconcilable meanings without pre-judging them, and his sharpest irony is reserved for those who insist that only their explanatory terms are really "true" and "complete." Paradoxically, to think clearly is to "fall into disorderly company," because there simply is no unique formula or single perspective that can satisfactorily encompass the diverse meanings of a term such as water within a hierarchical order.

It is only for the insane that everything falls into place, like the sex-murderer Moosbrugger, whom Ulrich views as "a rampant metaphor of order." For the truly mad, the whole universe is just a manifestation of their demand for an absolute order based on the impoverished categories of their own egos. Thus, during Moosbrugger's time in jail, Musil gives us a terrifying glimpse of a too-ordered consciousness at its most pathological:

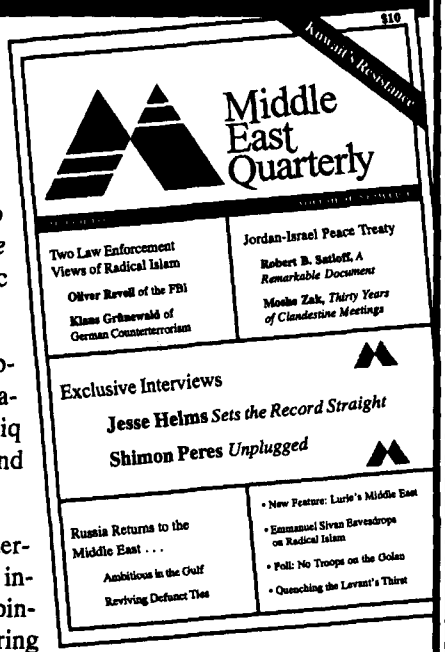
> If Moosbrugger had had a big sword, he'd have ... chopped the head off his chair. He would have chopped the head off the table and the window, the slop bucket, the door. Then he would have set his own head on everything because in this cell there was only one head, his own, and that was as it should be.... The table was Moosbrugger. The chair was Moosbrugger. The barred window and bolted door were himself.

Ulrich's flexible and inclusive intelligence is emphasized so strongly in the essayistic passages of Parts One and Two, precisely because his longing for a new kind of mystical "oneness with the world" in which "all affirmations express only a single surging experience" is not without an eerie affinity to Moosbrugger's ecstatic delirium. And it is precisely our familiarity with Ulrich's essayism, his insistence on the provisional character of any realization, that makes us trust his experiences of transcendent wholeness in Part Three, while still, like the narrator himself, keeping a certain critical distance from the full sweep of Ulrich's and Agathe's "second reality." But because the essayistic mode of being relativizes everything, Ulrich is no more willing to stay entirely within rational, analytic categories than he is able to abandon them completely. Hence, at the end of his meditations on water, he discards the abstract concepts to pull himself back into his body, by becoming aware of "that dumb but deep, exciting sensation ... when one sniffs one's own skin." Immediately afterward we are told that Ulrich "stood up and pulled the curtains back from the window," and the mundane gesture startles us because in this chapter, as so often at the end of Musil's "essays," one needs to remind oneself of the actual location of the thinking characters, so completely has the narrative been given over to the ideas.

Even in Proust and Joyce, where the inner thoughts of the characters are the real focus of interest, we never forget the context and circumstances that both frame and often prompt those thoughts: Molly Bloom lying in bed, or Marcel listening to the rain falling outside his window. In Musil, by contrast, there is often no indication that any particular set of events or immediate anxieties have triggered what is being thought about. Indeed, the absence of any readily categorizeable motivation

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for their musings is what distinguishes Ulrich and Agathe from the other figures in the book, whose delight in large, philosophical-sounding pronouncements is brilliantly satirized by having its self-serving and self-referential function laid bare. Musil's most vividly realized secondary characters, like the great industrialist Paul Arnheim (modeled after the German tycoon and Weimar Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau), or the Austrian aristocrat Count Leinsdorf, all use ideas to validate their particular class or professional interests; society figures such as Diotima try on important cultural issues like a sort of jewelry, designed to confer distinction on their bearer. (Leinsdorf is memorably described as being unable to recognize anything in what he reads, "other than agreement with or mistaken divergence from his own principles.")

But the refusal to exploit ideas ideologically, to inflate the limited and fixed perspectives of a class or character into a totalizing explanatory system, only raises the stakes of the book's deep intellectual quest for *das rechte Leben*, the right life and the right way to live that life. Since Ulrich's scientific and mathematical skepticism co-exists with a powerful longing for a condition of being in which feeling and knowledge would act in concert, neither perspective can be sacrificed. To him, "faith as a diminished form of knowledge was abhorrent," and he uses his analytic intelligence to question the slack religiosity of those whose dissatisfaction with the modern world comes not from a need for something more, but from a futile wish to go back to some earlier, supposedly less complex order.

IV.

Of course, readers of *The Man without Qualities* know from the outset that the world the novel describes has very little time left before perishing in the conflagration of World War I. But Musil does not use the reader's knowledge of the imminent dissolution of Austro-Hungary as a basis for representing the actions and hopes of the characters in the book as absurd, nor is his ironic perspective on contemporary political events based on their eventual outcome. The Parallel Campaign is not ludicrous because the ruler it planned to honor will die and his dynasty be overthrown before the celebration's announced date. In its intellectual incoherence and ideological blindness, the Campaign is ludicrous from the moment of its conception.

In the salons and the ministries of Vienna, the chance of a general European conflict is kept in mind, but it is presented as only one of a wide range of possibilities, and avoiding such an outcome is the chief purpose of many of the characters in Musil's book. *The Man Without Qualities* is full of intimations of the coming war, but it is just as resonant with suggestions that such a cataclysm can be prevented. The important point is that Musil skillfully allows the whole range of ideas and hopes held by his characters in 1913 to be heard clearly on their own terms. He regularly satirizes all of his characters' positions, but only when their blindness and self-deception are already fully demonstrable in the context of their own day, not when they fail to foresee the future.

Musil's solution to the technical and epistemological problems raised by the narration of historical events whose outcome is already known is exemplary in its fairness: it is impossible for the reader to suspend a knowledge of the book's historical aftermath, and so the narrator deliberately plays on that knowledge, not to exploit it for the emotional intensities that it might add to the story, but to undermine any sense of historical inevitability. The dense network of voices and ideas makes the reader's faith in a superior, because subsequent, vantage point impossible. There are so many plausible scenarios for the future sketched out in *The Man Without Qualities*, so many different hopes and expectations expressed by characters in a position to make astute forecasts, that the novel swarms with projections of contradictory prospects. Inevitably, though, because we know which of these projected futures come to pass, we are tempted to pay special attention whenever any character seems to articulate what actually happened as the likeliest possibility. Musil repeatedly makes fun of the urge to endow a specific moment with greater portentousness because of what actually ensued: "Time was making a fresh start then (it does so all the time).... There was great excitement everywhere around the turn of 1913-1914. But two years or five years earlier there had also been much excitement."

Just as Ulrich is deeply frustrated by the gulf separating modern man's expert knowledge in the professional and scientific areas of life from the uncritical assumptions with which he interprets the world in his private and moral life, so the novel as a whole seeks to undo the narrative conventions by which the reader imposes a linear, scripted pattern on the motility of historical events and individual psyches. Musil's irony works so effectively because he expects readers to approach a novel set on the eve of the Great War as though it would manifest all the familiar devices of deterministic inevitability. Thus we, too, are already "set up" by our own expectations to undergo the shock of realizing that all of us, not just the book's characters, indulge in no longer credible patterns of thinking.

For Musil, history is not destiny. The most satiric parts of Musil's novel describe a world in stasis or in a self-perpetuating muddle, rather than on the verge of disintegration. The Habsburg Empire that we actually are shown could just as easily have lasted for many years more. Musil's typically ironic, yet serious way to establish the speciousness of deterministic thinking is to deny the attribute of inevitability even to Divine creation: "God himself probably preferred to speak of His world in the subjunctive of possibility ... for God creates the world and thinks while He is at it that it could just as well be done differently." And this, in a sense, is also the problem confronting the novelist.

The novelist must create a plausible world while still indicating that "it could just as well be done differently." And so, irrespective of some posthumous drafts in which Musil briefly tries out having Ulrich go into combat, it is unlikely that the war could have been inserted successfully into the novel. Only by setting his narrative before the outbreak of hostilities can Musil guarantee that neither his characters nor his narrator speak with predictive historical certainty. Since Musil is so concerned to show that many things can be imagined as likely to happen, that history is not driven by any rational principle or internal logic that would let the future be accurately predicted, he is also particularly careful not to allow the war to undermine the novel's fidelity to a sense of multifarious possibilities (*Möglichkeitssinn*). To include the war directly would risk giving it the privilege of being not just an event in the narrative, but rather its meaning, and this, precisely, is what Musil thought unacceptable.

But simply at the level of composing a coherent work of art, Musil's refusal to use the war as an externally authenticated closure to his book left him with an impossible struggle to create a structure that would provide a narratable resolution to his theoretical and ethical requirements. This he failed to do. His failure is clear not only from the incompleteness of the novel at the time of his death, but also from the nature of the last sections that he actually published and the enormous mass of drafts and

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fragments he left behind. A variety of reasons—including depression over the lack of an audience, an intermittent but long-standing "writer's block," intellectual exhaustion, the financial uncertainties of an exile's life—have all been advanced to explain Musil's inability to complete his book. But once Musil rejected ending the novel with the melodramatic thunderclap of the outbreak of war (say, for example, with the reading of a telegram announcing Franz Ferdinand's assassination at what would then obviously become the last meeting of the Parallel Campaign), the novel had to remain unfinished, I think, for strictly internal reasons.

The Man Without Qualities is a work that, for all its biting irony, struggles to achieve not a distance from the world, but an adequacy to the world's complexity. The problem, in its simplest terms, is that the exclusion of the war turns the various contradictory futures projected by the book's different characters into permanently available possibilities. This in turn makes the novel itself permanently unresolvable into an outcome of any kind, since the choice of an ending counter to the real, historical one would have the intolerable effect of relegating the entirety of the book to the realm of the fantastical. Even a resolution in the text that remained entirely private but had no correspondence in or influence on the public world—say, the illuminations of what Ulrich and Agathe call their "holy conversations" on the nature of love—would have been unsatisfactory and, by Musil's standards, unprincipled. Hence the need for Musil to make clear that even these two marvelously prepared lovers fail to sustain the "incomparable birth of the spirit out of darkness."

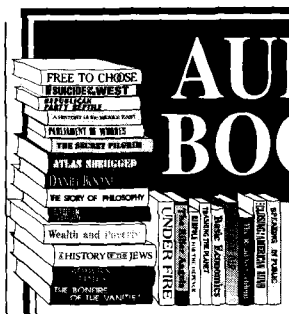
And yet the posthumous fragments about Ulrich's and Agathe's quest for a new and private way of living contain some of the book's most moving passages. The satiric tone of the earlier portions drops away. Musil's spiritual yearning begins to penetrate Ulrich's and Agathe's discussions, and so does his extensive reading in the Church Fathers and Christian mystics. Finally their "understanding gives way to irrepressible astonishment." This love story encompasses intellect, passion, transcendence and rootedness in the world in a way that is unique in post-medieval literature. The intense inwardness of some of the meditations do succeed in giving intimations that a different relationship to self, world and desire might be attainable. Sometimes, in reading these chapters, it is almost as if we are encountering a poet simultaneously imbued with the ecstatic longing of a great mystic and the fastidious rationality of a great logician:

> Not only do external relationships melt away and re-form in the whispering enclosures of light and shadow, but the inner relationships, too, move closer together in a new way.... And it is not the mouth that pours out its adoration but the body, which, from head to foot, is stretched taut in exaltation above the darkness of the earth and beneath the light of the heavens, oscillating between two stars. And the whispering with one's companion is full of a quite unknown sensuality, which is not the sensuality of an individual human being but of all that is earthly, of all that penetrates perception and sensation, the suddenly revealed tenderness of the world that incessantly touches all our senses and is touched by them.

The chapters containing passages such as this one have never before appeared in English, and their presence alone makes the new edition indispensable.

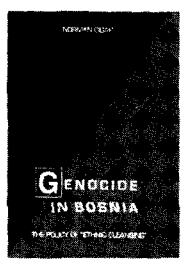
The previous three-volume English translation by Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser originally appeared between 1953 and 1960 and has long been out of print. It contained only those sections published during Musil's lifetime, thus omitting not only all of the posthumous drafts and fragments, but even the chapters that Musil withdrew from publication in 1938. The new edition, elegantly printed in two volumes and ably translated by Sophie Wilkins and Burton Pike, thus contains almost 50 percent more material than the earlier one, and its arrangement of the posthumous drafts is in some ways even more satisfying for the nonscholarly reader than the German source-text. Whereas Frisé prints the posthumous material in reverse chronological order, beginning with the pages on which Musil was working at the end of his life, Burton Pike, who was responsible for these portions of the book, shrewdly chooses to group the material together according to the characters treated, the alternative plot developments with which Musil was experimenting, and finally according to Musil's notes about the novel as a whole.

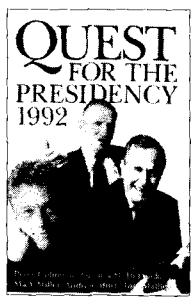
These sections are wonderfully translated, and the startling shifts in Musil's tone, from analytic to ecstatic, from aloofly ironical to soaringly impassioned, are rendered into English with some of the rapidity and the sharpness of the original. To translate Musil requires a good measure of the precision and soul that he himself sought in his life and work. Pike's translation often attains this union. The same, alas, cannot said of the earlier parts, done primarily by Sophie


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Wilkins. Although she corrects some obvious errors and anachronisms in the first English version, her ear betrays her with distressing frequency. Typically, for example, she refers to Ulrich's father as having been elevated, like Alfred Musil himself, to Austria's "House of Lords," a term that immediately suggests London rather than Vienna. She then tops this by offering "Cultural Revolution" as a chapter title, without realizing that readers are likely to think they have been transported from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the People's Republic of China.

Far more distressing, though, is Wilkins's clumsiness with Musil's epigrams, and when two versions exist, almost every instance makes clear the superiority of the 1954 rendering. (Compare Wilkins's "But having more of a life is one of the earliest and subtlest signs of mediocrity" to the older "But this capacity to experience more is one of the earliest and subtlest signs by which mediocrity can be recognized.") Still, there are also definite improvements: "Parallel Campaign" is better than "Collateral Campaign," and, best of all, the title of Part Two (*Seinesgleichen geschiet*) is translated, with a touch of inspiration, as "Pseudoreality Prevails," instead of the older and largely meaningless title, "The Like of It Now Happens."

But finally, such dissatisfaction with particular formulations matters only insofar as it might encourage some revisions in future printings of this edition. The translators and the publishers have given us the version of *The Man Without Qualities* that will define Robert Musil's achievement for this generation of English-speaking readers. In one of Musil's plays, a character cries out in frustration, "But then life always makes you choose between two possibilities, and you always feel: One is missing! Always one—the uninvented third possibility." To read *The Man Without Qualities* is to encounter, in all its intellectual richness and imaginative density, the risks and the excitements of that uninvented third possibility. •

The Party Circuit

BY ARTHUR SCHLESINGER JR.

The Secret World of American Communism by Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov

(Yale University Press, 348 pp., $25)

It is an oddity of our time that the fall of communism in the rest of the world should be accompanied by the rise of the sentimental glorification of communism in America. The Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), we are often told, enlisted the bravest and most generous-hearted Americans in the 1930s and 1940s. The CPUSA, according to revisionist scholars, was an essentially indigenous organization, defined not by its perfunctory professions of loyalty to the Soviet Union, but by its intense commitment to social and racial justice in the United States.

The CPUSA, these scholars argue, played a vital role in the labor movement, in the civil rights movement, even in the New Deal itself—propositions that, if accepted, have the ironic consequence of confirming from the left the accusations that the House Un-American Activities Committee used to level from the right. As for premature anti-Stalinism, the revisionists regard this not as proof of intellectual and political insight, but as a defect of character and even as a cause of McCarthyism. The repudiation of Stalinism in what was once the Soviet empire has plainly not blighted the romance of Stalinism at home, especially among young scholars who never had, as my generation did, the sour experience of dealing personally with American Communists.

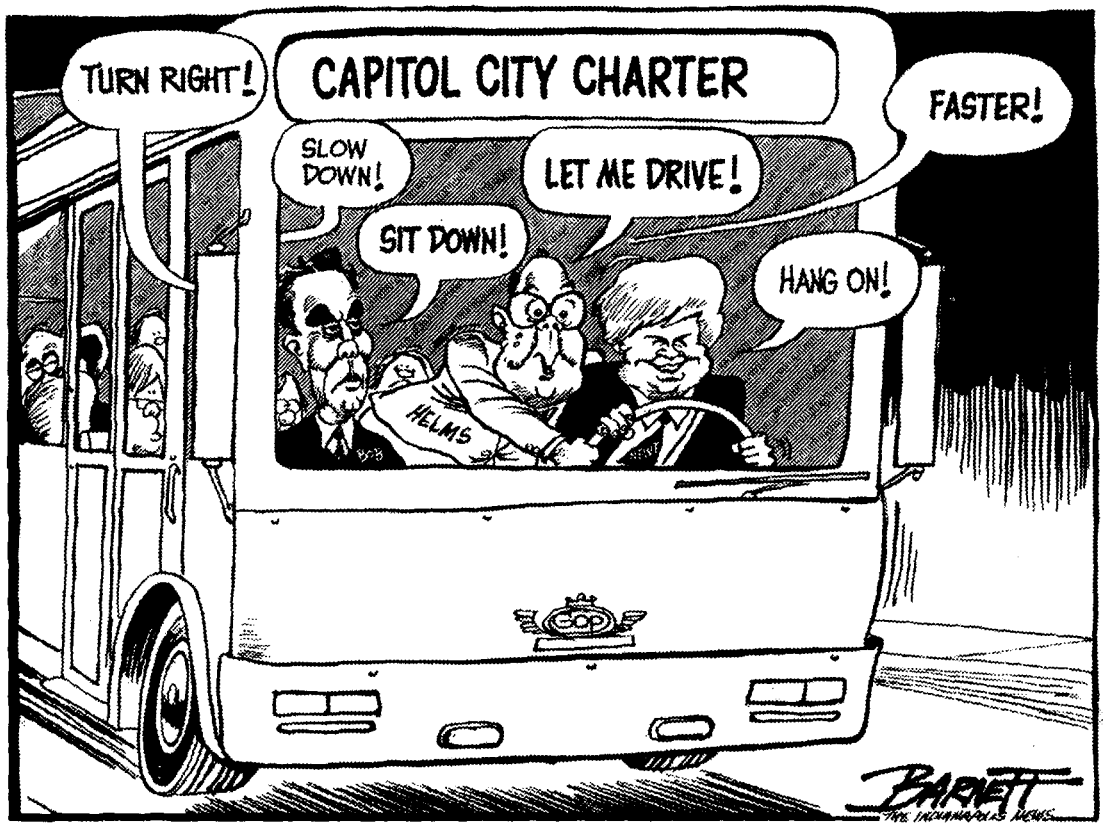
The end of the cold war has brought the historiographical debate into a new phase. The opening of Soviet archives at last provides an opportunity to discover what the relationship actually was between the Kremlin and the CPUSA. The condition of these archives is chaotic, and the pattern of release confusing and unpredictable. Western researchers seem to negotiate their own individual deals with Russian archivists: John Costello and Oleg Tsarev have an arrangement with the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service that has resulted in their book *Deadly Illusions*, with more books to come; and *The Secret World of American Communism* is the first in a Yale University Press documentary series called *Annals of Communism* drawn from Soviet state and party archives. Thus Soviet documents trickle out in a disorderly way. Still, the present trickle is a great improvement over the old drought. The invaluable *Bulletin* of the Woodrow Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project helps scholars to keep up with the flow.

The Secret World of American Communism, as its title suggests, illuminates the hidden side of CPUSA activities. Documents now available in Russia prove beyond any question that the American party functioned as an instrument of Soviet espionage. They confirm, that is, precisely the charge that revisionists have long and indignantly denied. Many of these documents are drawn from the files of the Communist International, the body entrusted, until its dissolution in 1943, with control of national communist parties. For much of its existence, the Comintern served as the Kremlin's main arm for foreign intelligence and covert action. Other documents are drawn from CPUSA files confided to the Comintern for safekeeping. The documents have been selected and annotated by two students of American communism, Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes, in collaboration with Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, a Russian scholar and the former head of the Comintern Archives at the Russian Center for the Preservation and Study of Recent History.

The picture drawn in this volume is necessarily fragmentary. The editors had no access to the so-called Presidential Archive, which holds the documents sent to Stalin and the Presidium; nor to the archives of the NKVD and the GRU, the Soviet military intelligence agency, both of which also ran spies in the United States. The Comintern and CPUSA documents presented in this volume, for example, do not settle the Alger Hiss question. Nor, for some mysterious reason, will our own National Security Agency release the so-called "Venona" intercepts of Soviet wartime intelligence messages decoded after the war. Incomplete as it is, however, the documentary fallout indisputably establishes that the CPUSA was not only funded by "Moscow gold," as the Hearst papers used to say, but that it recruited agents and conducted espionage.

In 1920 the Comintern laid down as a condition of membership that each national party must create an illegal "organizational apparatus which, at the

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decisive moment, can assist the Party to do its duty to the revolution"; and in 1930 a Comintern memorandum, written by an official in Moscow and sent to the CPUSA, reminded the American comrades that

> all legal Parties are now under the greater responsibility in respect to the creation and strengthening of an illegal apparatus. All of them must immediately undertake measures to have within the legally existing Party committees an illegal directing core.

The American leadership was always ready to do its duty to the revolution.

These revelations will surprise only those who cling to the doctrine of Communist innocence. As one who wrote nearly half a century ago (*in Life*, July 29, 1946) about Stalinist penetration of the liberal community, the labor movement and the government, I cannot say that I learned much new; nor does the section on the Washington Communist underground add much to what I wrote a third of a century ago in the twelfth chapter of *The Politics of Upheaval*, or to Earl Latham's able book *The Communist Controversy in Washington* (1966), or to Theodore Draper's incisive writings on the history of the CPUSA. What *is* new is that confirmation now exists beyond further argument.

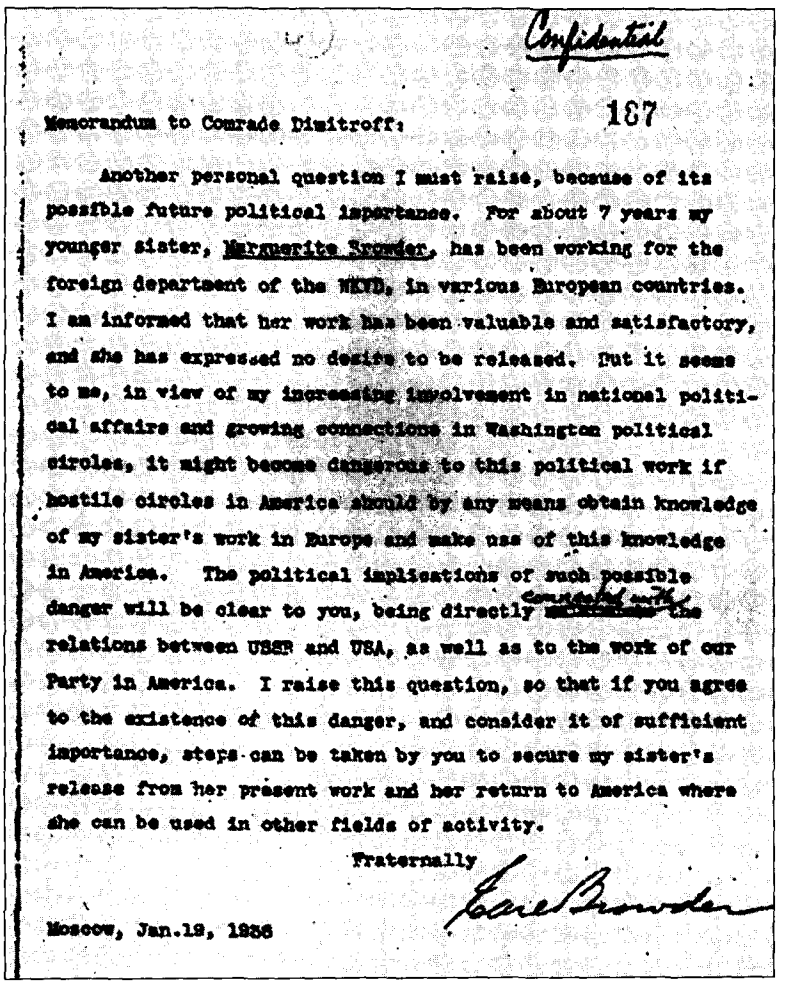
The book provides some interesting disclosures about individuals. Harry Bridges of the National Maritime Union is identified as a cardholder, and the documents "definitely establishing Bridges's membership" are promised in a subsequent volume. Edmund Stevens, *The Christian Science Monitor*'s Moscow correspondent who won the Pulitzer Prize in 1950 for critical articles about Stalin's last years, was evidently at one time a party member. Then there is the strange case of Frederick Thompson, a wealthy San Franciscan, brother of the popular novelist Kathleen Norris, a retired capitalist and a member of the Bohemian Club, who held a secret party card. The story of Josephine Truslow Adams, a disturbed woman who persuaded Earl Browder that she was his direct intermediary with President Roosevelt, is not new, but it is well told.

"It is no longer possible," the authors write, "to maintain that the Soviet Union did not fund the American party, that the Soviet Union did not maintain a covert apparatus, and that key leaders and cadres were innocent of connection with Soviet espionage operations." The CPUSA, though "certainly a radical political movement ... was also a conspiracy financed by a hostile foreign power that recruited members for clandestine work, developed an elaborate underground apparatus and used that apparatus to collaborate with espionage services of that power."

In the wake of this documentation, the fallback position of the revisionists will doubtless be that, while these underground activities were unfortunate and deplorable, knowledge of them was confined to the leadership, and so the exposure of this "secret world" does not damage the revisionist portrait of the Communist rank-and-file as brave and selfless soldiers in the cause of humanity. There is something to this view, as the authors concede: "Americans became Communists for a wide variety of motives, many of them entirely honorable and decent." A quarter-million people may have passed through the CPUSA between 1919 and 1960. For many it was a revolving door, and the principled among them departed for the same reason that they had entered: because they remained faithful to ideals of decency and justice that they found had no standing or sustenance within the party.

The CPUSA's own documents present a squalid picture of intrigue within the party, obsessive factionalism, witch-hunts, heresy trials, persecutions of dissenters, expulsions—and not by the leadership alone. "No competent and able control commission can be effective," as a 1939 party document put it, "if the task of exposing and weeding out enemies in the party is not successfully carried out by the lower ranks." The leadership showed more concern over penetration by Trotskyites and Lovestoneites (followers of Jay Lovestone, who defied Stalin in 1930 and later became an éminence grise for the American Federation of Labor) than by the FBI, and the CPUSA sent its own agents out to penetrate Trotskyite and Lovestoneite groups. Those groups were described in 1938, in a report by the head of the Central Control Commission of the CPUSA to Moscow, as "the most insidious agents of fascism and reaction," in the same report in which Stalin's show trials of the time were praised for their "everyday practical use to every branch and organization of the Communist Party today."

It is easy to understand how the pressures of depression and fascism led people to join the CPUSA; but it is hard to see how honorable people, given the paranoid inner atmosphere of the party, the Moscow trials, the pact with Hitler and the twists and turns produced by subservience to Soviet policy could stay in the party very long. Certainly those who did were corrupted in the process. As Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in June 1945,



Confidential

Memorandum to Comrade Dimitroff: 187

Another personal question I must raise, because of its possible future political importance. For about 7 years my younger sister, Marguerite Browder, has been working for the foreign department of the MKYD, in various European countries. I am informed that her work has been valuable and satisfactory, and she has expressed no desire to be released. But it seems to me, in view of my increasing involvement in national political affairs and growing connections in Washington political circles, it might become dangerous to this political work if hostile circles in America should by any means obtain knowledge of my sister's work in Europe and make use of this knowledge in America. The political implications of such possible danger will be clear to you, being directly connected with the relations between USSR and USA, as well as to the work of our Party in America. I raise this question, so that if you agree to the existence of this danger, and consider it of sufficient importance, steps can be taken by you to secure my sister's release from her present work and her return to America where she can be used in other fields of activity.

Fraternally

Earl Browder

Moscow, Jan.19, 1938

LETTER FROM EARL BROWDER, LEADER OF THE CPUSA, TO GEORGI DIMITROV, LEADER OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL, JANUARY 19, 1938

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For years, in this country, they taught the philosophy of the lie. They taught that allegiance to the party and acceptance of orders from party heads, whose interests were not just those of the United States, were paramount.... Because I have experienced the deception of the American Communists I will not trust them.

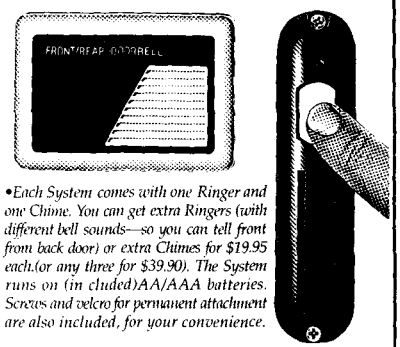
One might wish that the tone of the editorial commentary in *The Secret World of American Communism* had been more neutral and objective. The documents themselves carry the indictment, and sarcastic annotations diminish their force. And the editors are rather uncritical about American ex-Communists. Their defense of Whittaker Chambers is plausible, but that of Elizabeth Bently is less so; and they go too far when they gesture toward the rehabilitation of Louis Budenz, a former *Daily Worker* editor, who was notorious for unsupported scattershot accusations.

At one point the editors claim, without documentation, that Laurence Duggan of the American Republics Division was one of the Communists in the State Department. Now, Sumner Welles and Adolf Berle, who worked with Duggan on Latin American matters, were both anti-communists, Berle preternaturally so, and they both rejected this charge long ago. I well remember an argument I had in the Office of Strategic Services with Maurice Halperin, then a Communist (and the subject of a recent biography, *Cold War Exile* by Don S. Kirschner, published by the University of Missouri Press) over the Bolivian revolution of December 1943. Halperin, who kept a copy of each day's *Daily Worker* on his desk, took the party line that the revolutionaries were Nazis and that the new regime should be denied recognition. Seeking outside support, I found that Larry Duggan in State strongly opposed the Communist Party view. Without supporting evidence, the Yale University Press should not have permitted this book to blacken the name of a man whom many knew as an able public servant.

The editors also share with the revisionists a penchant for exaggerating the importance of the CPUSA. When they claim "a substantial organized Communist presence in a number of government agencies in the 1930s and early 1940s," they overplay the impact of ephemeral party members serving in marginal bureaus and congressional committee staffs. Looking back, I don't think that the CPUSA had much influence on anything. The New Deal, American foreign policy, the CIO: all would have evolved in the same way if the CPUSA had never existed. What the

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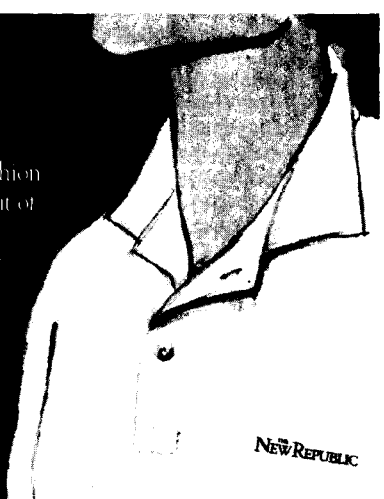
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CPUSA did succeed in doing was to compromise and to betray American radicalism.

For all its occasional editorial defects, however, *The Secret World of American Communism* is a valuable work. Among other things, it dishes the revisionists and it amply vindicates the conviction of anti-Stalinist liberals that liberalism and communism had nothing in common, in their means or their ends.

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER JR. is the author most recently of *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (W. W. Norton).

Life on the Run

BY ANN HULBERT

The Rule of the Bone by Russell Banks

(HarperCollins, 390 pp., $22)

Russell Banks narrates his new novel in the colloquial voice of a 14-year-old who has the possibly unique distinction of almost never using a certain four-letter word: "like," as in "I'm like how am I going to tell my story, and he's like don't ask me." A staple of adolescent vernacular, "like" is a hiccup of self-conscious diffidence: don't mistake me for sincere or eloquent, I'm cool and non-committal. That Chappie Dorset, a high-school dropout from a small town in the Adirondacks, is free of this tic of teenage dialect is a key to his lineage, and thus to the tradition that *The Rule of the Bone* aspires to. Banks is aiming higher than an adolescent classic in the mold of *Catcher in the Rye*, for and about the disaffected young in an age of indulgence. (Holden Caulfield would have run "like" into the ground if he'd had the chance.) He intends an indictment of a decaying and divided era, which is meant to be heard by adults. And he has The American Classic in mind. Chappie Dorset's literary antecedent is Huck Finn, the 14-year-old witness with an utterly original voice.

Huck's voice, though inimitable, is a model in two useful ways. It is self-aware without being self-conscious, and it is persuasive whether delivering clear-eyed testimony or indulging in imaginative embroidery. His form of delivery, in other words, has nothing to do with diffidence. Huck's unapologetic deadpan style depends instead on qualities often at low ebb in adolescence: self-confidence and independence, resources that abandoned boys are quickly driven to develop. Like Huck and completely unlike the blasé Holden, Chappie is a social outcast whose whole heart is in his account of the deformed world in which he finds himself; he isn't striking world-weary poses. In fact, Chappie (who soon adopts the more oracular moniker of Bone) sometimes gets away with a declamatory note that Huck never could, for Banks doesn't mind readers who are tempted by what Twain, in his prefatory "Notice," expressly warned his audience against: the search for motive, moral and plot in the conscience-pricking story told by a haunted young rustic.

Banks has never been reticent about the motive behind his fiction. He laid out his credo most explicitly at the close of *Continental Drift* (1985), where he announced that "good cheer and mournfulness over lives other than our own, even wholly invented lives—no, especially wholly invented lives—deprive the world as it is of some of the greed it needs to continue to be itself." Banks doesn't claim that fiction conveys factual truth that can change anything. Though he has made it his mission to portray the gritty particulars of existence on the peripheries (blue-collar towns in the rural Northeast, enclaves of new arrivals and foreign immigrants in Florida, villages on Caribbean islands), he is under no illusion that mere reportage will set anyone free. The liberating force lies instead in the feelings of empathy that inspire a writer to create the "facts" of his fiction, and in the sympathy that fiction in turn inspires in readers. Banks has emphasized an almost primitive notion of storytelling as exorcism, for the teller and for the listener. And he has repeatedly set himself the challenge of letting comparatively untutored characters have their say.

Chappie fits naturally into Banks's succession of storytellers, an heir apparent. For with him and his saga, the moral underlying Banks's work up to now asserts itself with a new force. The child is father of the man: that has been the very unromantic lesson that almost all of his novels and stories, in different bleak ways, have illustrated. From the start Banks has distinguished himself as a family chronicler of an uncozy kind. In cramped and angry domesticity he finds grim auguries of personal and national destiny. Shades of the prison-house close all too soon on growing boys (and more rarely, girls), and entrapped men and women are the result in *The Sweet Hereafter* (1991), *Affliction* (1989), *Success Stories* (1986) and *Continental Drift*, to mention just the second harvest of Banks's prolific two-decade career. A cycle of paternal rage and abuse is at work, producing generation after generation of fathers who harbor bruised boys within, ready to strike back. In *Continental Drift*, Bob Dubois faces up to the disheartening drama of arrested development that dominates Banks's fiction:

> For years, Bob was one of those people who believed that there are two kinds of people, children and adults, and that they are like two different species. Then, when he himself became an adult and learned that the child in him had not only refused to die or disappear, but in fact seemed to be refusing to let the adult have his way, and when he saw that was true not only of him but of everyone else he knew as well—his wife, his brother, his friends, even his own mother and father—Bob reluctantly, sadly, with increasing loneliness, came to believe that there are no such things as adults after all, only children who try and usually fail to imitate adults. People are more or less adult-like, that's all.

Until now Banks has focused on grown-ups, and proved himself an expert on the myopic innocence that maturity can cling to. His characters are desperate dreamers. His typical plot turns on their refusal to accept what feels like frustratingly little control over their lives, especially when the world beckons with bigger promises. When they succumb to those promises, they discover the world won't make good on them, and they are left feeling even more powerless. Not surprisingly, one thing over which they have a frighteningly frail grasp is their children, as Banks pointedly dramatized by making a school bus accident the crux of his previous novel, *The Sweet Hereafter*.

In what now looks like a warm-up for Chappie's epic monologue, Banks had 14-year-old Nichole Burnell, a lucky survivor of the accident, narrate one of the five sections of the book. Her story, and *The Sweet Hereafter* as a whole, are the ominous calm before the storm of *The Rule of the Bone*. Nichole is the abused

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daughter who buries her pain in high performance (she's the junior-high-school salutatorian). And in a novel that is built not on action (the tragedy has already happened when the book opens) but on reactions, her response to the event helps give the shattered Adirondack town at least some peace. Here the wise disillusionment of children—the complement, in Banks's world, to the childish delusions of adults—is clearly on the way to becoming his main subject.

In *The Rule of the Bone* Banks gives the entire story over to a child, and the result is brutally, often fantastically, picaresque. Twain threatened shooting as the penalty for anyone looking for plot in his novel: Chappie, at nearly every turn in his adventures, is either dodging or firing bullets. He is the antithesis of Nichole—a wounded boy who drops out of his family, his town, his country and finally out of the category of run-of-the-mill delinquent to which he (with help from others) has consigned himself. For Bone, like Huck before him, is by no means unregenerate. His recounting of high drama among a crowd of deadbeats, and a few true companions, gives his good soul and honest imagination a chance to prove themselves.

Here, as before, Banks sees to it that his provincial portrait has a panoramic sweep, a continental drift. *The Rule of the Bone* is another parable about lost American innocence. And for the most part Banks's confidence again pays off, thanks not least to his gift for psychological portrayal of a notoriously difficult kind: he maps the inner life of characters who are commonly assumed not to be introspective or articulate. He manages to make Chappie a hapless boy and yet also an acute narrator of a series of exploits that themselves seem both accidental and part of a literary pattern. As each chapter of Bone's misadventure unfolds, the new predicament he finds himself in seems nightmarishly contingent—the realistic travails of a down-and-out delinquent. But taken together, the episodes strain credulity as a rough-hewn memoir, as they are meant to. Bone's monologue assumes very symmetrical and symbolic shape, and very consciously strikes echoes of Twain (and of Banks's own previous work) as it proceeds.

Chappie, who recounts his year-long odyssey in retrospect, starts out, like Huck, by emphasizing a smoking habit that gets him into trouble at home. For Chappie, the weed is marijuana. He doesn't think twice about ransacking his house when he finds himself penniless and eager to get high, for life with his stepfather and mother has been edgy for some time. Chappie, with his nose-rings and mohawk haircut, is perfectly willing to take some blame for bad relations in a passage that conveys the matter-of-fact, fair-minded tone of his voice:

> It was getting toward the end of summer school and I knew I was going to flunk at least two out of the three courses that I needed to pass just to get out of eighth grade which was going to make my mom crazy and deeply piss off my stepdad who already had his own secret reasons for disliking me but I don't want to talk about that now.

As that typically run-on sentence suggests, with its hint of abuse, Chappie also feels his parents have plenty to answer for. When he pawns his mother's coin collection to buy dope, and then assaults his stepfather when his parents discover the theft, the uneasy truce between generations is over. Banks captures the mix of defiance and confusion, pride and remorse, with which Chappie leaves home to join his friend Russ—a fast-talker of the Tom Sawyer variety—who has been living with a band of bikers.

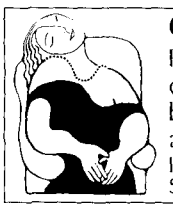
The first in what is to be a succession of parodic "families," the motorcycle gang marks one step down the road of criminal marginality (the bikers deal drugs and steal). Chappie evokes life in their company with what comes to be his characteristically dark comic flair: he wryly compares them to dogs, he being "the ultimate little dog and it was all I could do to keep from pissing down my own leg." Chappie's underground exploits are a distorted mirror of life above ground, and the criticism of callous and irresponsible America they convey is stark. But Banks consistently gives the messages an ironic twist, rescuing them from sanctimony. At one point, moved by sympathy, Chappie rescues a small girl from the clutches of a pervert who evidently bought her—only to talk himself into returning her to the crackhead mother who sold her. Moved by resentment at another point, he trashes the fancy summer house of some rich people—only to confront the flagrant indulgence of his own act. Chappie, in his role as social conscience, is suitably confused.

With a sure sense of pacing, Banks periodically takes a break from the action and sends Chappie to hide out in an abandoned school bus in the woods, which turns out to be the wreck from *The Sweet Hereafter*—Banks's version of Twain's raft. It serves at first as an image of hopelessness, when Chappie finds it inhabited by two drug addicts (who turn out to be Nichole Burnell's brothers), but it also becomes an emblem of hope. Just before he falls asleep one night, Chappie has a utopian vision of the bus, and the dream shows Banks working at perfect pitch. The passage has the specific pathos of a kid's comforting nighttime fantasy, and yet at the same time it's a more sweeping comment on the search for community, one of the novel's main themes:

> It would be wicked cool to have a real bus, one that worked and all and fix it up inside like a home and drive it around the country your whole life, stopping whenever you felt like and making a little money off a job for a while and if you got restless just taking off again. You could have friends and family with you some of the time and be alone some of the time but basically and this would be the best thing, you'd be in complete charge of your life like those old pioneers in their covered wagons.

Like others in the growing company of writers who have been reviving the American tradition of backwoods yarn-spinning, Banks clearly finds it a liberating return to naturalistic storytelling. It offers a respite from minimalism that needn't mean staid narrative conformism. In fact (as Carolyn Chute, Jayne Anne Phillips and others have shown) it invites Gothic character exaggeration, surreal scene-making, violent drama and often a dose of primitive spiritualism. Banks stands out as knowing how to overdo to just the right degree, and throughout the first half of the novel he leavens thematic sobriety with lively theatrics. It's when he introduces his brand of exotic spiritualism in the middle of the book that his remarkably agile touch threatens to get heavy.

Bone meets up with a ganja-growing illegal immigrant from Jamaica, I-Man, a Rastafarian dedicated to liberating the slave within. Chappie's transformation from underdog outlaw to idealized outlaw, under the tutelage of this Jim figure for the '90s, is the drama of the rest of the book. It's a quest that begins with disillusioned hopelessness in America, when Bone's stepfather stands in the way of an attempted reconciliation with the family. The journey ends with unillusioned hope in Jamaica, where Bone finds his real father, a decadent cocaine addict. Taking stock of him and of himself, Bone gathers strength to embark


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on his own independent future.

Such an odyssey of vindication marks a departure for Banks, whose specialty has been men who can't reverse, but can only accelerate, their downward course. Here he is at his characteristic best as he explores the combustible mix of fear, frustration and passionate feeling that makes life at home and in Jamaica dangerous, sometimes in surprisingly similar ways. In Banks's America, divisions have never been deeper. And the post-colonial menace of Jamaica, filtered through Bone's eyes, is as ominous as it has ever been in Banks's fiction. Racial troubles and family strains, which he labored hard to link in *Continental Drift*, here overlap more easily; homelessness in *The Rule of the Bone* has a long history.

But it looks as though Hollywood has edged out Huck as the inspiration at several key moments in Bone's saga. Well before a redemptive ending comes into view, the novel has beckoned as prime film material: an action-packed adventure, full of visual potential, with a huge target market. But with the formulaic scripting of its turning point and its concluding scene, *The Rule of the Bone* risks begging for the screen a little too obviously. Banks can't resist an Oprah-style trauma to send Bone off to Jamaica, and a Disney scene of transcendence to prepare him for his return to America.

Bone, as we have been alerted at the start and are informed in graphic detail in the middle of the book, has been sexually abused by his stepfather—who threatens him again, a last straw that helps propel Bone to Jamaica. Banks can't be accused of jumping on the child-abuse bandwagon; after all, the theme has been, more and less subtly, at the heart of his work for a long time. But given the focus on paternal molestation here, and given the recent surge in its popularity as a plot device (it threatens to become the contemporary equivalent of the classic fatal illness ploy), Banks faces higher hurdles in pulling it off. Child abuse, once it has been overused as a sensational revelation, does more than lose its shock value; it becomes a sentimental formula.

For to presume that the abuse of children is a widespread reality rather than a fantasy, as Freud ultimately concluded it was, has the paradoxical effect of restoring a very romantic idea: the utter dependence and purity of children. When abuse is given literary center stage as a motivation or explanation for events, or even alluded to in the background, it has a way of shifting the light in the coming-of-age novel: young characters are flattened into passive victims, and maturation begins to look more like a melodrama about corruption than like an awakening to a complicated world. It's exactly this kind of reduction that Banks capably skirts before the scarring secret is out. After, though he works hard to keep roguish Chappie from becoming merely a wronged innocent, the revelation has inevitably introduced a shallower therapeutic perspective.

The end of *The Rule of the Bone* brings another brush with bathos. The novel closes with Bone on his way back from Jamaica, lying at night on the deck of *The Belinda Blue*, the boat that meant death for illegal Haitian refugees in *Continental Drift* but that will mean a new life for Bone in his own country. After the visions he has had during the Rastafarian rites of self-discovery I-Man has led him through, the closing revelation Bone describes is almost bound to be an anticlimax. Still, his resort to clichéd inspirationalism comes as a jolt. Bone gazes up at the stars, and finds in them constellations of the figures who have meant most to him: the biker who once tried to save him, "the sign of the bad boy with the brave heart"; the girl whom he tried to save, "the sign of the rejected child"; and I-Man, "the shape of a lion's head with a crown, the constellation Lion-I, the sign of the open mind."

It's disorienting to hear in this the cloying strains of *The Lion King*, the blockbuster paeon to family values in a time of absent fathers and cultural blight. ("The great kings of the past look down on us from these stars. They will always be there to guide you....") Banks's recurrent subject—the struggle to take one's fruitful place "in the circle of life" rather than continue a generational cycle of destruction—is not any less rich for being hugely, and often banally, popular. It is, though, that much harder to sustain at a vigorous and subtle imaginative level. What is striking is how successfully daring Banks has managed to be with his vernacular hero. The triteness at the end, while Chappie lets the credits roll, shouldn't drown out the story that has come before, which has followed the energetic and idiosyncratic rules of Bone. •

Up

Morning snow and even the cars look pretty.
Even the telephone wires, even the electric transformer
mounted behind the Saunders' shed,
the gray metal box filigreed with sleet.
Even yesterday's ice, still asleep.

From the kitchen radio the usual news
perks like coffee—updates and commercials,
the slush of rush hour—until the anchorwoman
drops her almond croissant
as the traffic copter hits a blinding squall
and is forced down into the storm.
Russ, are you there? Russ? Russ?
Furious rotors whipping, the clangor
of metal sheering, visibility
reduced to the altimeter's spin

—and beneath the huge, whirling machine
a student stands in the pith of the snow,
wrapped in sweats on the tennis court,
practicing his *tai chi chuan*.

What he must have seen!
From the steady, ancient balance
of fingertip, wrist and elbow,
through the shoulder with a constant, precise
dripping of water, all his weight
pooled in the arch of the right foot ...

with an idea of marble, with a marble eye
he looked up into the falling light.

To be clapped by the roar of being.
To look up, to open a fist
slowly, uncurling each finger until
the palm cups the soul, offers up the soul.

He looked up into everything
there was, and then he stepped
away, perfectly.

Alan Michael Parker

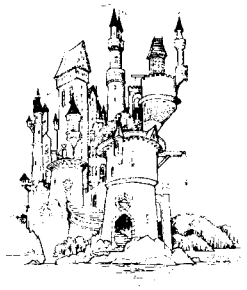
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BONN DIARIST

Recycled

NOT LONG AGO, I SPENT A WEEK IN Bonn, where I had lived for a year and never quite gotten over the small-town humdrummery of the place. The liberal Germans I knew there seemed to take Bonn's dullness as an emblem of its virtue. Even now, they worry that when the seat of government moves to Berlin, as it's scheduled to by 1998, history will somehow infect the German people again, leaving them hungrier to dominate than they've been in years. Bonn, they point out, has been the locus of Germany's long-lasting democracy, while Berlin, of course, was the capital of the Nazi government, if not of the Nazi movement. This Bonn-fetishism is superstitious—akin to the Social Democrat Oskar Lafontaine's remark that to give the Germans even a minimal military role in the world would be like giving a liqueur-filled bonbon to an alcoholic—and it doesn't make much sense in a democracy as stable as Germany's. But I think my friends invoke the fear of Berlin mostly to show that they are good Germans, with exquisitely tuned historical sensibilities, and also, perhaps, as a sort of talisman—to name your worst-case scenario out loud is to keep it at bay. Conservatives worry about the move for other reasons. Berlin is home to squatters, and druggies, and the Mad-Maxish street-rumblers known as the anti-Fa (for anti-Fascist), who like to beat up neo-Nazis and demonstrate in support of immigrants and mix it up with the police. In Bonn, on the other hand, the anti-Fa have never been much of a problem; public order of any kind has never been much of a problem, and politicians stay cozy and insulated.

THE FACT IS THAT, THOUGH BONN has been the capital since 1945, it has never lost its resolutely uncosmopolitan air, nor its penchant for orderly living. For a foreigner living there, especially, perhaps, an American, it can border on the oppressive. These things happened within our first three months in Bonn: a delegation of our neighbors knocked on our apartment door to protest that we did not scrub our (very dark, very clean) stairwell once a week, though we were required to by German law. One of them, speaking in tones that might have been appropriate had we been running a brothel out of our home, called us "shameless." My husband locked his bike next to rather than inside a city bike rack, and returned to find that someone had stuck a typed note on the seat saying: "Why can't you park your bike like everyone else?" Some Australian friends were reported to the police for planting tulips in their garden on a Sunday, when it is illegal to work in your yard. Our landlord complained that we weren't recycling our cat's hair and our own toenail clippings in the new organic recycling program, an oversight she discovered by extracting our vacuum cleaner bags from the trash and inspecting their contents.



ON MY RECENT VISIT, I was happy to note that there was at least a movie in town I wanted to see, Margarethe von Trotta's *Das Versprechen* (*The Promise*), which had premiered with some fanfare at the Berlin Film Festival in February and was billed as the first feature film to take on the drama of reunification. True, it did so through the hokiest of narrative devices—two lovers (impulsive blond Sophie, pensive dark-haired Konrad) separated by the wall, then brought together again on the night of November 9, 1989. And, true, German film has lately fallen into a derivative slump, churning out bad imitations of Hollywood romantic comedies (German? romantic? comedy?) while its leading directors bemoan the Hollywood invasion. Still, I had high hopes for *The Promise*, and was disappointed when it turned out to be trite and TV-movieish. It's the kind of movie in which people scream with lusty abandon as they're being dragged off the street by the secret police, dialogue creaks with world-historical portent and the weather under communism is always bad. There were scenes in *The Promise* that I felt I had seen before and after a while, I realized that in a sense I had. All of the scenes from the night the wall fell, for example, were exact recreations of the familiar television footage of that night—down to the camera angles and lighting, the gestures and facial expressions of the actors playing the real people who had swarmed across the border. There's a way in which those pictures—the indelible images of communism's collapse—crowd the imagination. Certainly they crowded von Trotta's. It reminded me of an interview I had seen with Günter Gaus, the journalist who served as West Germany's representative to East Germany during the '70s. Gaus said that the fall of the wall and the reunification of Germany had been so mediated by television that no one in Germany could really have his or her own memory of it. He compared the collective memory of 1989 with that of the end of World War II. However hard Germans may have tried in the war's immediate aftermath to repress their memories of it, when they began to remember, at least they summoned up their own pictures, not a TV producer's.

THERE IS A TELLING SIGN THAT all the hard work Germany has done to confront the Nazi past has not turned it, quite yet, into a normal nation. And to my mind, that sign, or symptom, is not the anti-Semitism of the neo-Nazis. It's the philo-semitism of the chattering classes: all the many, awkward little ways in which well-meaning Germans defer to Jews, and ask for their seal of approval and glory in their "folklore." The fashionable people who do the fashionable thing by sending their (non-Jewish) kids to the newly reopened synagogue school in Berlin. What they often seem to have in mind is not the assimilated Jews who lived in Germany fifty years ago but some Yiddish-speaking, Klezmer-playing, perpetually davening figure from a Chagall village. At a conference in New York a few years ago, I offered to show a group of first-time German visitors around the city. What these women wanted to see, it turned out, were Jews—orthodox Jews. So off we trooped to Borough Park in Brooklyn where a German guidebook assured them they would find plenty. The women were all in their 30s, and the guilty, vicarious, utterly romantic nostalgia they felt for Jewish life put me in mind of the New Age fascination with things Native American. Perhaps the weirdest case of the phenomenon I came across while living in Germany was that of the German ice-dancing team. Jennifer Goolsbee and Hendryk Schamberger, who competed in the Lillehammer Olympics, chose to choreograph their routine to the strains of Klezmer music. She wore light blue and he wore a prayer shawl and—what was it wrapped around his arm? Could it be...? Yes, it could. Phylacteries. The couple's coach explained that Goolsbee and Schamberger, neither of whom is Jewish, wanted to "give the message that we feel for the Jewish people." They probably do. So did the women I took to Borough Park. What exactly they feel is another question.

MARGARET TALBOT

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